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# Nihilism in Theory and Praxis

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## NILILISM IN THEORY AND PRAXIS

### ABSTRACT:

Although the formal inspirations behind the author's sculpture works feel as though they arise spontaneously and subconsciously, they do not in fact emerge from an intellectual vacuum. They represent intuitive reactions to the author's physical, social, political and economic context mediated through his personality, experiences and education. This PhD Thesis provides an opportunity to step back from the practice of sculpting itself to examine and document the creative process and the many forces of which the sculptures are a product.

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.

Samuel Beckett

Purely for the purposes of organisation, this PhD presents an examination of the creative process in three parts - Background, Theory and Praxis. In truth these do not form a linear sequence as in the sculpture is produced by his or her formative years and background, the sculptor then adopts a philosophical framework through education and reading, the sculptor then goes on to create three-dimensional artworks. Each part, rather, feeds into and reflects the other parts. The development of Theory affects the background, in opening the individual up to new perspectives, while the Praxis of sculpting brings to light a deeper philosophical knowledge of the significance and limitations of materials and forms. These discoveries also play a central role in developing the way the sculptor's context is experienced. The three parts are detailed as follows:



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## **Part One: Background:**

The author was born in 1969 in Aksehir a small town in the south of Turkey and spent his childhood in many different cities in Turkey till he was 15 years old when he was moved to Ankara, the capital of Turkey. The author's family was large and he was not raised in poor or insecure circumstances, but the family did need to be careful about spending money. Many things in our house were recycled or repaired and the budget dedicated to basic requirements (food, clothing etc.). Anything worn out or broken was never thrown away but repaired or kept for future use. To take one example, a screwdriver with broken handle was fixed by melting scraps from other plastic items.

A huge element of my thinking is based on my awareness that aesthetic values and norms are exclusive rather than inclusive, that society does indeed contain halves of weak and strong. My admiration lies with the weak for they are more ingenious by necessity and, in being forced into this position, are able to project new values and insights into a society that is otherwise stagnant and content to perpetuate accepted values, no matter how tired these become.

## **Part Two: Nihilism in Theory:**

Social inequality and the phenomena it triggers are neither new nor limited to any geographical area or notion. Many of the author's concerns find echoes in Frederick Nietzsche's writings from over a century ago. To Nietzsche, the

individuals furnish their lives by manipulating whatever materials are to hand to become tools. In a society, he argues, where accepted values reflect the taste and privileges of the wealthy, the poor (the 'weak' in his terms) have greater liberty as well as need to exercise their will to power. It is from their actions that new thoughts are realised and, eventually, new values established.

To the author this process is shown especially in the way the weak create tools like furniture or kitchen utensils, mostly by converting de-valued, thrown-away or hidden materials. With this perspective the author tries to develop a parallel connection between the conditions such people live in and his own use of materials to make sculptures.

### **Part Three: Nihilism in Praxis:**

This part is divided into two chapters. The first part is the theoretical approach to materials. New, unconventional uses release unrecognised but valid meanings inherent within materials. This is as if materials themselves have their own will to power, their own narrative (e.g. coal as patience, as diamond-in-waiting). Comfort and conformity with existing values denies openness to these hiding worlds; discomfort and the inability to conform forces them to be discovered.

The second stage of this part explains how the literature helps me to accomplish the theoretical origin of my creation process.

## **0. Introduction**

### **0.1 The nature of practice-based research**

The practice-based PhD in sculpture requires the production of a work of sculpture and also a short thesis that reflects on and develops the core ideas behind the work of sculpture. Although concerned with a description and analysis of these ideas as theory in their own right, the thesis contains a retrospective view of how these ideas were realised in the sculpture. It is in the very nature of sculpting that the praxis of realising ideas in artworks may also feed into the development and further awareness of the theories per se. To quote E.M. Foster (cited from article by Frayling, C 1993/4 p.5):

“How can I tell what I think until I see what I make and do?”

For this reason, although the thesis contains the components of theory and praxis, as given in the title, these are most mutually exclusive. The discussion on theory is illustrated with a retrospective view of the author's earlier sculptures, for these demonstrate how his personal philosophy emerged and developed. Similarly, the discussion on praxis includes a deeper discussion into the underlying theory, particularly in the author's choice of coal and bones as materials and the obstacles and opportunities that consequently evolved.

Given that the practice-based PhD in sculpture contains a certain self-referential element, it is appropriate that it should be distinguished from other kinds of



documentative research that focus upon other people's work. As such, a practice-based PhD in sculpture is individualised just as an autobiography differs from other forms of written text.

In other words, it is essential to an understanding of this document of the philosophy it covers and even of the artworks described, to know who the author is. The sculptures are more than responses to ideas the author encountered in the philosophy poems and artworks of other people, although these were vital in guiding the author and indicating ways to bring certain ideas into a three-dimensional, physical reality. The author's background and character are integral to his creative process, as exemplified in the repeating motif of the 'hiding instinct', for example, and in the nature of academic texts that appealed to him.

## 0.2 Sources:

One of the earliest sources for the ideas behind the author's sculptures came from certain observations made of people living in poverty. Of particular interest was their improvisational adaptation of everyday objects and materials into tools and other goods. Their very absence of the means to buy the corresponding, 'correct' manufactured products forced them to improvise, to use the resource of their imagination in furnishing their lives. In a seeming paradox, their weakness gave them self-empowerment.

Such self-empowerment by otherwise comparatively powerless people is made more interesting in connection with some philosophical ideas offered by Nietzsche (1844-1900). The notion of 'will to power', or the process of self-empowerment, taken together with the notion of tragedy, inspires the question of whether and how the adaptation of everyday objects into tools and so on can be seen as evidence of a will to power, or process of self-empowerment; and if so, whether and how it is nevertheless tragic, a self-empowerment that is ultimately tragic.

### **0.3 Retrospective;**

As mentioned, the practice –based PhD in sculpture contains a retrospective view of lived experience of actually producing the sculpture. The three principle components of this process are:

- (a) Spontaneous creativity – the art of capturing a moment in life, by way of projection onto an artist's senses, and the subsequent filtering through his mind.
- (b) Serendipity – the fortunate convergence of circumstances or resources that opens a new door to the use of some already existing skill, idea or interest or, to put it differently, "where planned insight is married to unplanned events"(Fine,G and Deegan, J 1994. P.6).
- (c) Innuendo – the use of subliminal reference to events, ideas, dates etc. through the subtle and intelligent arrangement of relevant material.

The retrospective element of the thesis focuses on describing how these three components played a role in the production of the sculpture.

## **Part 1 Background**

### **Chapter 1: The author's childhood**

The author was born in Turkey in small city and spent his childhood in many different cities in Turkey. When he was 15 years old he was moved to Ankara, the capital of Turkey. His first impressions upon arriving there was the massive complex of shanty houses at the entrance to the city. This was really surprising for him because in the small cities where he lived before there were no such shanty houses. The effect was like seeing a sea of dishevelled, lopsided and unconventional dwellings.

The author's family was large and he was not raised in poor or insecure circumstances, but the family did need to be careful about spending money. There was little surplus money to spend on luxuries and the household did not have many comforts. Many things in our house were recycled or repaired and the budget dedicated to basic requirements (food, clothing etc.). Anything worn out or broken were never thrown away but repaired or kept for future use. To take one example, parts were cannibalised from broken radios and combined or put into newer sets in

order to create functional radio. The result was a radio that looks different, visually messy and worthless, but at least it functioned. Also, any plastic material was never thrown away, but stored away for future customised use. For example, broken plastic baskets were fixed by melting scraps from other plastic items over the gaps and again it is true that, while the fixed plastic basket looked ugly and not 'up to scratch' in social terms, it was nevertheless functional and able to be utilised by the family. In another case, a defunct electric oven was brought back to working life through a series of repairs and additional or replaced parts. Over the course of this, of course, it took on a different shape, but this was not a criterion that the household could afford to be concerned about. What mattered above all else was that it was in use. Equally, for clothes, missing buttons would be replaced with buttons of different style or colour.

The result might visually look odd but it was functional. In short, many things in home were functional but unsatisfactory to the eye. It is difficult to admit in hindsight that the author did not always appreciate these objects from his childhood years. They appeared irritating and conveyed all too clearly, the message that the family was not well-off, or at least not well-off enough to be able to emulate the lifestyles, taste and aesthetics of the rich – the so called 'proper' people in society. However, the author came to realise that there was indeed something more noble and honest in this undisguised breadline existence than in any pretence that the family had more wealth than it really did, and could therefore dress in fine clothes, or throw radios



and ovens into the bin when they ceased to work. In a way this make-do aesthetic told a more accurate and authentic story about existence itself and the author grew to become impressed with the ingenuity behind these mended things and proud of the honest witness to life they expressed. In future this was to become the underlying dimension in his creative, sculptural object-making process.

## Chapter 2: The author as a sculptor

### 2.1 Introduction

Bruce Nauman is one of the leading artist in modern art history who talks about how economical condition shapes his art work.

"I have always felt that I have worked with whatever money's been available and whatever equipment's been available. You just do the work. Using those things as an excuse. Like 'I haven't got the money or the equipment or the room' are bad excuses for not doing work" (Bruce Nauman, 1998, p.118).

As the following chapter argues, Nietzsche (1844-1900) believed that all humans were imbued with tragic, individual and Dionysian values. These represented the authentic personality of the hero. Yet he also held that they were kept in check and prevented from being realised by opposing

Apollinarian values exemplified by a stifling Christianity and the conventional roles people took on society. To him they had become the 'herd' afraid to recognize the essential tragedy and suffering of life. Those few who defied social constraints and realised their own heroic personality were 'self-empowered' in exercising their 'will to power'. They not only become greater people (supermen) but also founts of new truer values that would change social norms.

This philosophical viewpoint finds many echoes in the author's background, as outlined in the previous chapter. There, people living in poverty and who had no option but to create new tools for living (from kitchen utensils to furniture to houses) could not by economic necessity, subscribe to accepted taste as it applied to possessions. Were they not then realising new value inherent in the materials they used? Were such people truly 'weak' because they were poor and unable to belong to affluent society or had their very poverty been a driving force in freeing them from tired, conventional values and thereby enabling them to become heroic? These questions formed the bedrock of the author's admiration of the poor and played a major role in his determination, as a sculptor, to celebrate the meaning of where, how and why his creativity evolved.

## 2.2 Education in sculpture

The author began his education in sculpture in Hacettepe University Fine Arts department in sculpture in 1987. In Turkey, however, there is not a huge demand for sculpture as it is recognised in the western art world. There is, however, a market in commercial decorative works such as statues, architectural columns and stage designs and the nature of education reflects the eventual vocational opportunities.

The first two years of the four year course were accordingly traditional. The greatest benefit was in learning how to develop ideas using the drawing process prior to realising sculptures in clay, stone or wood.

The third year of art education and onwards progressively came to focus on personal creativity and the skills associated with this. This allowed the author to move onto the stage where the art works are the product of 'real' creativity rather than responses to specific, or hypothetical commissions. Allen Leepa (1987, pp.35-36) declares that "important creativity comes from the student's own self-motivated inspirations and not necessarily from the assignments and directions coming from the teacher that arise from clearly defined specific concepts and proposals". What Allen Leepa describes was the third year of my education, which focused upon the importance of the student's own self-motivated inspirations. However, this stage of the author's education, although valuable in providing a grounding of expertise and self-confidence,

of expertise and self-confidence, was still constrained by the social, economic and psychological characteristics of Turkey.

The author's immersion in a context where the emphasis is on artists to realise their own personal philosophies and inspirations, rather than those of their clients, began in his fourth year, his master's year in Virginia Commonwealth University sculpture department in the U.S.A. Here the author encountered an education system that depended primarily upon personally-held concepts. The recognition and use of materials came second in the process of making sculpture.

At this point, the author's education could be looked at as consisting of two stages: the first stage was a 'learning process' focused on the countless problems that need to be overcome in order to sculpt; and the second stage was 'creativity process', concerning as Leepa states (Allen Leepa, 1987, pp.35-36) "student's own self-motivated inspirations, dreams, hopes, goals, fantasies, frustrations, conflicts and day-dreams". Moreover, the Hacettepe University did much to give maximum freedom to its students' creativity. To a great extent the provision and transportation of material was catered for by the institution – thus opening up significant opportunities for students to realise their more ambitious concepts.



### 2.3 Economical background

The preceding section indicates the stark difference of approach to art in the two different countries. The author studied in during the four-year period of education in Turkey, obtaining all the materials for his works presented enormous difficulties. This consideration also affects his future works. The cost of materials like metal, wood, stone or bronze were high but it was also essential to be aware of this; no matter how generous university's facilities were in providing these materials, the sculptor would certainly have to meet the challenge of obtaining affordable materials subsequent to leaving the university. An other difficulty encountered in Turkey was the lack of storage facilities, resulting is most of the author's early works not be kept due to this. To solve this problem, he usually broke up his previous works in order to re-use and customise the material in future sculptures. The process could be described as facing economic reality in order to keep your idealism.

For the reason given above, the author found the American experience vastly easier and preferable to that of his education in Turkey. Nevertheless, and in a significant way, the context in Turkey was more critical to his development as a sculptor, both in terms of theory and praxis. As this section describes, and as is explored in greater detail in the remainder of this thesis, the hardships, limitations and even the suffering that economic reality imposed upon the sculptor formed an authentic of his context and eventual source of inspiration. As Nietzsche argues, "If a

man wanted to love something, he could only love the cell where he has been jailed". In Nietzschean terms, therefore, the buttressing from economic troubles offered by the American education system, while designed to liberate the artist, paradoxically diminishes his or her awareness of the tragic values of life from which come true and truly personal ideas. As the quotation from Bruce Nauman at the start of this chapter states, the artist who uses material lack as an excuse to create no work in fact lacks the will to be a genuine artist.

As chapter four (Nihilism in Praxis) further elaborates, the economic obligation the author set himself was no obstacle to his development as a sculptor. Quite the opposite, it formed a vital and integral extension of the theoretical viewpoint outlined in Chapter Three (Nihilism in Theory). It forced the author to live by his ideas on a day-to-day basis, rather than regard them as an interesting and inspiring philosophy. Having to confront his own financial weakness and do whatever was possible from such difficult circumstances tested the author's will to be an artist and, in doing so, his creativity was both confirmed and reinforced. Through facing up to his weakness and accepting the struggle it entailed was also decision that isolated the author from the social, economic and political values of the art world and society. In other words, the author eventually found his freedom to realise his own social, economical and political values and bring these into his sculpture practice.

## 2.4 Conclusion to part one

The author hopes that the preceding two chapters not only introduce him as a person with a distinct history but, at the same time, highlight how the philosophical approach of Nihilism also emerged in a way that is deeply integrated into the author's true personality.

Where he writes of his will to power, his admiration for the weak, his acceptance of the poverty of his own existence, his perspective on conventional values and his desire to express new values, this is more than simply discussing the philosophies and insights of other people. It is confessional; it is honest. Where the author wishes to create, he wishes only to be honest. In the words of Nietzsche "where my honesty ceases I am blind and want to be blind".

Part Two, Nihilism, is therefore very much the core of this thesis. Its two chapters (Nihilism in theory and Nihilism in praxis) develop in great detail the ideas that have shaped the author's output. They take much of their reference from the writing of Frederic Nietzsche, who was in many ways the founder of this philosophical approach and, particularly in the Chapter on Nihilism in praxis, highlights poetry, texts and works of art that indicate a nihilistic approach.

## Part 2 Theory

### Chapter 3. Nihilism in theory

#### 3.1 Introduction

"What Nietzsche wants is an appearance of character. For Nietzsche, in becoming what one is, the task is to fit together one's strengths and one's weaknesses into an artistic plan, until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye" (Pearson, 1994, p.134).

Nihilism, a premise central to the writing of Nietzsche (1844-1900) is the state of being of an individual who does not accept, or is not constrained by the values and norms prevalent in his or her society. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the will to power in nihilism. It offers an explanation of a theoretical framework related to people who live in poverty and based on their unconscious creation process released by repairing and fixing goods in order to meet everyday necessities.

The chapter opens with an overall discussion about nihilism and the problem of conventional values. It states that life is essentially tragic and that societies develop value systems that disguise this reality and allow people to ignore their true, ongoing suffering. It explains the philosophy into which Nietzsche formulated this perspective and his contention that those who have the courage or need to reject accepted values have a more heroic, yet tragic, grasp of their own destinies. These people are the "supermen" (ubermensch)



and, in the authors' eyes, those who live in poverty and create their own tools are supermen. When they use their will to power even for solving the most trivial everyday problems – how to play marbles when they can not afford marbles, for example – they achieve a powerful deed; they bring a new value from their impoverished situation into the world.

This act of changing values, the author argues is the obligation of the artist and the origin of art.

As a conclusion, the final section gives an illustration of these theories by explaining the 'hiding instinct', a recurrent theme in the author's works. These evolve directly from his acceptance of his own weakness and, as described by Walter Benjamin, also encapsulates the paradox of is taking up a weak position, a person may find and realise his or her true position of power.

### **3.2 Nihilism as the rejection of values**

Pearson's book 'An introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker; The Perfect Nihilist' (1994) is a useful source in order to understand Nietzsche's life and the changes and developments in his life time, which show how they had affected him. It recounts how Nietzsche severely criticised the Bismarck Germany's policy, in particular for its oppressive political revolution, which he thought unnecessary, believing what was necessary was to make changes in education and in turn, to create a critical way of thinking.

Nietzsche's childhood was fertile ground for the disillusionment of social values that were to characterise and drive his thinking. His father was a Lutheran pastor, who's mental health deteriorated and who died when Nietzsche was five years old. His mother adopted the role of housewife, a life style that prevented her from expressing, or perhaps even recognising, her own true personality. It is easy to imagine how these circumstances, when lived through by a person as remarkable as Nietzsche, would propel him to total disdain of restrictive social and religious values, and give him the mission to devote his life and intellect to arguing for the heroic value of the individual.

The real starting point for Nietzsche's career in philosophy came from his reactions against the government or administration at the time. These reactions in his case at the level of philosophy were interpreted by the artists of the same period as well as later periods, showing that there is a parallel in their awareness of the unhealthy oppression of the individual in favour of the state. Especially, Pearson, in his book (Perfect Nihilism) mentions 'pietism' (extremism in religion) and names Van Gogh as an example affected by this trend (Pearson, 1994, p.34). These insights are dealt with in more detail in section 3.5 of this chapter, The duty of the artist; The origins of art.

Nietzsche believed that religion and politics pacified people, weakened personalities, sapped their ambition and allowed people to be ruled in masses. As Nehamas (1985, p.127) asks:

"What are the forces that take hold of a given thing, what is the will that possesses it?" And while other artists used their creativity to respond in painting or sculpture, Nietzsche saw such questions as philosophical problems. The answer he proposed was that conventional values stifle the will of the individual and thus that the first duty of nihilism is to destroy these values by destroying one's own belief in their worth.

Philosophy often arises from a direct experience of widespread socio-economic insecurity characterised by a pessimistic perceived loss of control and acute awareness of glaring and pervasive inequalities. Philosophical attempts to interpret the art and ethics of life typically focus either on metaphysically conceived external causes (e.g. via theology, economics, the historical spirit) or on the possible responses of individuals. Nietzsche, for example, believed that the task of solving life's problems was best left to the individual on his/her own terms – and he developed his own theory as to how this may be accomplished. A particular interest for Nietzsche was accounting for the comparative status of individuals and how it may be developed; one of his claims was that a sense of control and empowerment may be achieved by a rejection of actions which would jar against one's principles. Thus we see in Nietzsche his infamous "God is dead" rejection of metaphysical conceptions beyond the individual and instead his stern emphasis on individual strength and courage as the source of our ability or inability to cope with life's problems.

“ Instead of retreating back due to fear, let us dance in the air and let us create a new world instead of complaining that there is no world which suits our existentialism” (Megill, 1998, p.67).

Nihilism is not a pessimistic philosophy, even though it does not accept the existing values in the society. It never says ‘no’ to life, instead, a great ‘yes’ to life with all its tragic suffering.

### **3.3 Reality as tragedy**

The rejection of values forces the question: “What remains?” The very term nihilism (from the Latin ‘nihil’ meaning ‘nothing’) suggests a bleak and unhappy answer: “Nothing. In rejecting the false values of society the nihilist has effectively dropped out of society to the level of a beast rather than a citizen or compatriot”. It is easy to interpret nihilism, therefore, as a self-destructive course that achieves nothing positive or commendable, and to avoid it.

Nietzsche, however, offers a more courageous and life-affirming answer, which is that the nihilist finds him or her true self. What remains is the person, undisguised and free to live as the personality, not the society, wills it. He warns too that this state of being is essentially a tragic one. The nihilist has no protection from his or her faults, weakness and sufferings; social mythologies such as religion and etiquette no longer offer comforts or excuses and there is no consolation.



Nihilism, according to Nietzsche was against the concept of God due to its state of nihilism, which he termed Dionysian. He regarded them as heroic people who attempted direct contact with the 'truth'. Yet the tragedy of their lives proved unbearable. They created the means to hide from reality, forming a panoply of gods and muses, great and small, upon whose quarrels and moods could be pinned the blame for human actions, natural disasters, personal failures and the tragedy of life. In Nietzsche's eyes, this cult of Apollo provided a snug in which people could avoid truth, and thus a land of heroes became a land of lesser people.

The despair of nihilism, itself closely related to existentialism, is often regarded as a 20<sup>th</sup> century realisation, Franz Kafka and Albert Camus represented this sense of desperation: the former through the inclusion of ghost images in his works and latter through his philosophical ramblings. Yet this despair should not be thought of as purely a phenomenon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; indeed, Iona Kucuradi (1997) states that the ancient Greeks felt it. As a result, the imaginary world of the Olympian Gods was created. It could be said that all the resulting works of art created were done so in order to facilitate life. Art, philosophy, literature, sociology and psychology are all related and interdependent, and differences arise purely from different methods of communication and/or different techniques.

Nihilism, according to Nietzsche was against the concept of God due to its perceived hypnotic effect upon the masses. Nietzsche can thus be seen as taking a humanistic approach.

Nihilism, according to Nietzsche was against the concept of God due to its perceived hypnotic effect upon the masses. Nietzsche can thus be seen as taking a humanistic approach.

Nihilism therefore highlights the concept of 'being nothing', that is when an individual is denied all the commonly recognised values in society. This would, in turn, trigger a new process of thought i.e. that people should create their own values. Commonly recognised values must be stripped of their perceived importance in order for individual values to be created. Adorno (1967) addresses this issue and offers a hypothesis for weak people's philosophical approach. In simplistic terms, an individual who owns everything would, probably, not be against societal values because societal values helped him/her gain status in the first place.

The stage of personal growth that follows from nihilism constitutes the positive, vital core of nihilism. For the individual is not, Nietzsche argues, left with 'nothing'. He or she is left with his or her authentic self. The following sections focus on the notion of this self and its ability to deploy itself in the world to create new values and, indeed, art.

Nietzsche described three typologies of personality displaying aspects of 'will to power': namely, "supermen being able to change the future and being beyond time"; "not being futuristic but being able to change oneself "; and finally; "man who behaves according to tradition in society and is satisfied with what is given" (Pearson, 1994, p.34). This final typologies could be seen to be the creator of the previous two. Although these typology were created according to man's characteristics, they could be applied to every aspect of the life.

According to Nietzsche, the superman is the one who has rejected the false values of society. The foundation for the superman of Zarathustra's doctrine is the denial of creator beyond this world. The denial suggests that the individual should focus on this world alone, and on his or her true part in it.

### 3.4 The will to power as the creation of new values

In willing to deny their social context, in willing 'nothingness', weak human beings "could now will something: no matter at first to what end, why, and with what they willed, the will itself was saved"(Nehamas,1985, p.124). Jeanne Hersch (2000) seems to accept this picture when she describes a world in which individuals create their own reality, calling it "the longing for the right to be human".

It seemed clear to Nietzsche that if people have no power of resistance, then they can be controlled by events and ideology. It is highly likely that his own defection from the religious and political pressures that sought to, and failed to, control his own destiny was irrefutable proof that he had a power of resistance deep within his self, and this enabled him to think beyond the bounds of 'accepted' thought, to confront new and dangerous questions and generate daring answers. To this he gave the term 'will to power'. "The will to power for Nietzsche is thus the metaphysical interpretation of what is. At its heart, the world is chaos lacks all order, arrangement, form, beauty, law, and purpose, each of its moments is governed by a commanding impulse or necessity, by a will to power. The will to power, however, is not merely the



motivating force in all things; all things are only as moments of the will to power and therefore only in and through their antagonistic relationships to all other things" (Gillespie, 1995, p.218).

Nietzsche's will to power cannot be formulated. This is because the drive of willpower is unconscious. He thinks that 'commonly recognised values' destroy personalities and he teaches that individuals should strain to understand themselves and should discover how to be themselves and never avoid questioning anything e.g. 'Who am I? or Why do I believe this?'. To him, there is not seem only one way through life for people; indeed, everyone solves problems in a unique fashion and in doing so, exercise their true personalities.

It is worth noting that in German the word 'Macht' (which Nietzsche uses for 'power' in the compound term 'will to power') is derived from the verb 'Mogen', meaning potential and is related to 'machen', meaning to make or create. For Nietzsche, therefore, 'power' exists as potentiality, so that in the term 'will to power' the word 'power' denotes not simply a fixed and unchangeable entity, like gravity or strength, but an 'accomplishment' of the will overcoming or overpowering itself (Pearson, 1994 p.46).

Nietzsche claims 'will to power' as not the power in the hands of God nor any power people must obey, but as people creating their own power to be free and to reject the lies and ideologies present at the time. Nietzsche states in his speeches against Christianity and the bourgeoisie that he has seen good



progress in people seeing the facts, but, that this was not enough to fully comprehend reality. Over this issue, he considers the usefulness of the concept of reality. For example, if reality is taken to represent 'commonly recognised values', then this should be applicable to every aspect of life. That is, the source of a new thing can be found in the denial of an old one and these new things do not have to be stronger than the old ones. The things claimed as new may only be on trial but the most important thing is the 'will to power' because this has been the energy that has allowed the new thing to enter the world. Nietzsche had this will to power and Adorno (1967) described Nietzsche as "trying to build a tower in the air from nothing" (cited in Cogito, 2001, p.209).

While Nietzsche's interpretation makes a direct, causal link between will to power and the socially weak, Pearson (1994,p.35) raises the prospect of a very different interpretation. He sees the possibility of social control of the will to power such that it can develop to favour the strong and reinforce existing values and ideologies.

The good life is often understood in terms of power; to live the good life is to be powerful, economically, spiritually or in terms of some other category that corresponds with social expectations. The life conditions of the weak people are seen to be filled with deficiencies and it is against such deficiencies that the weak must struggle to achieve some acceptable measure of the good life. However, all too often, the weak people (or simply those with insufficient will to power) merely try to fulfill

and perpetuate the basic conditions of their lives as they are, with no real personal advancement or improvement. Their efforts are directed much at trying to emulate the tastes and aesthetic of the propertied classes, rather than rebuilding the world to express their own individuality.

The author, however, believes that this make-do mechanism can but subvert existing ideologies and project new values and meanings into the world.

For instance, the weak build their own houses with the materials they can find and they repair and re-use the discarded, broken tools they come across. Thus they are not real consumers; they meet their requirements mostly by converting the waste (hidden) materials- converting pan handles into wardrobe door knobs for example.

This phenomenon can also be evidenced with examples from the author's own experience; a screwdriver (Figure 1, 2, 3) with a broken handle can be repaired by melting discarded plastics and by shaping them into the form of a new handle – the finished object may not look like a regular screwdriver one would find in a shop, but it is nevertheless functionally adequate as a screwdriver. The practice of repairing and reconfiguring broken tools and materials is not exclusive to the weak people of society. One need only think of the repair of cracks or holes in roads using slightly different materials from that which the road was originally made out of (Figures 4, 5). Or when children cannot find the

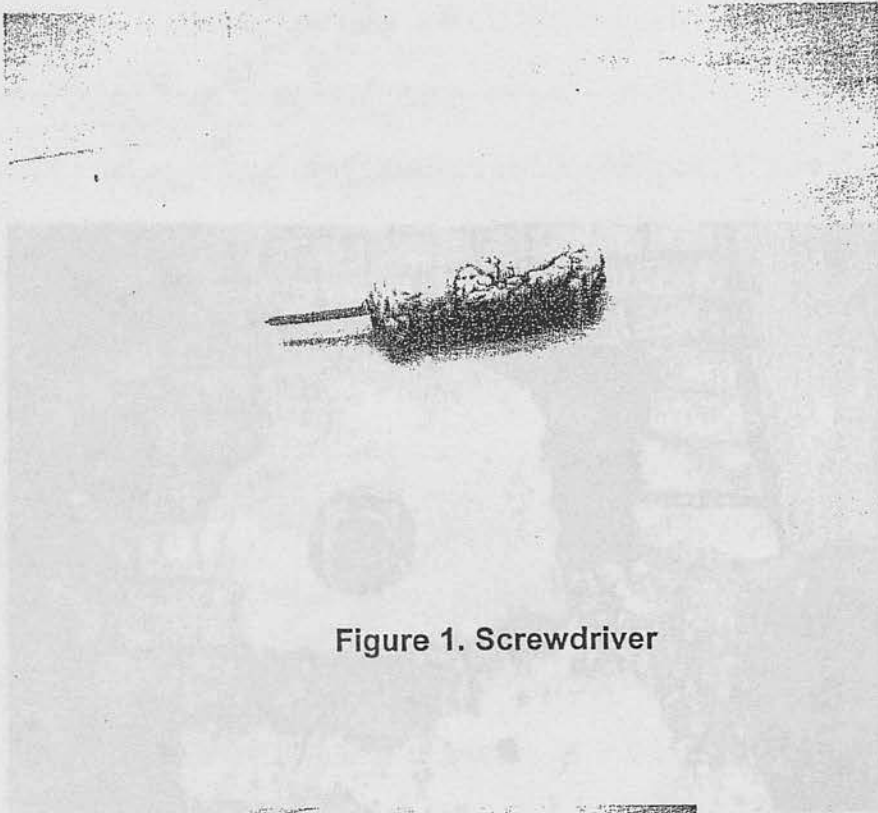


Figure 1. Screwdriver



Figure 2 Screwdriver

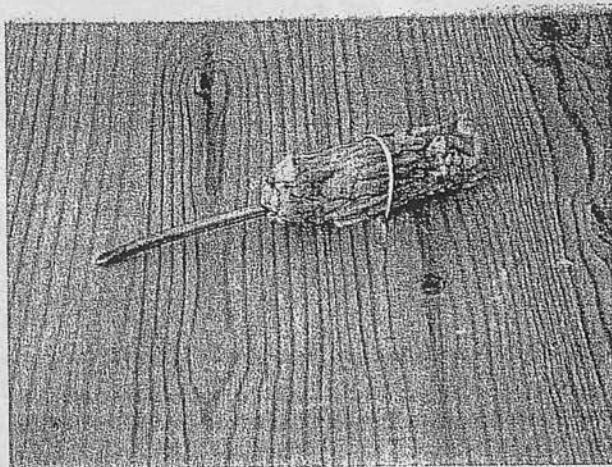
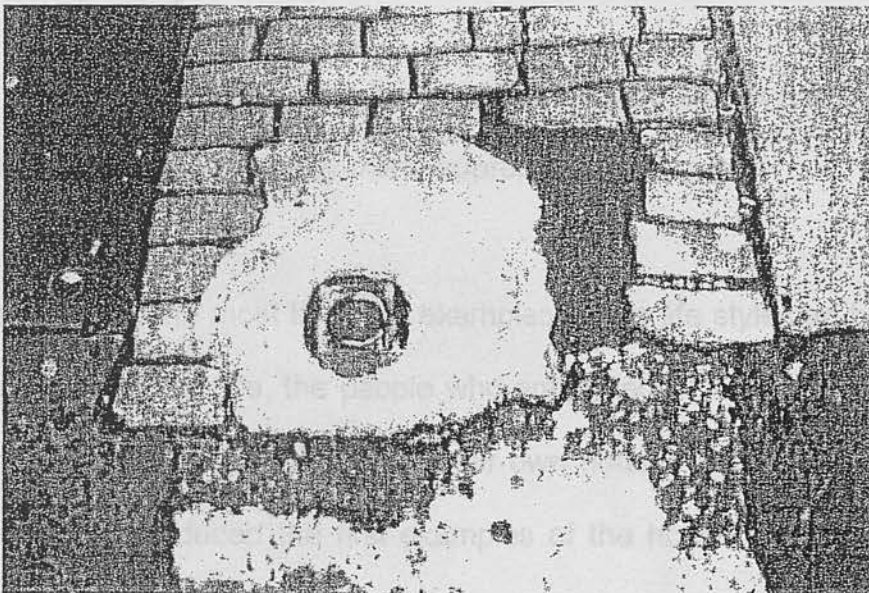
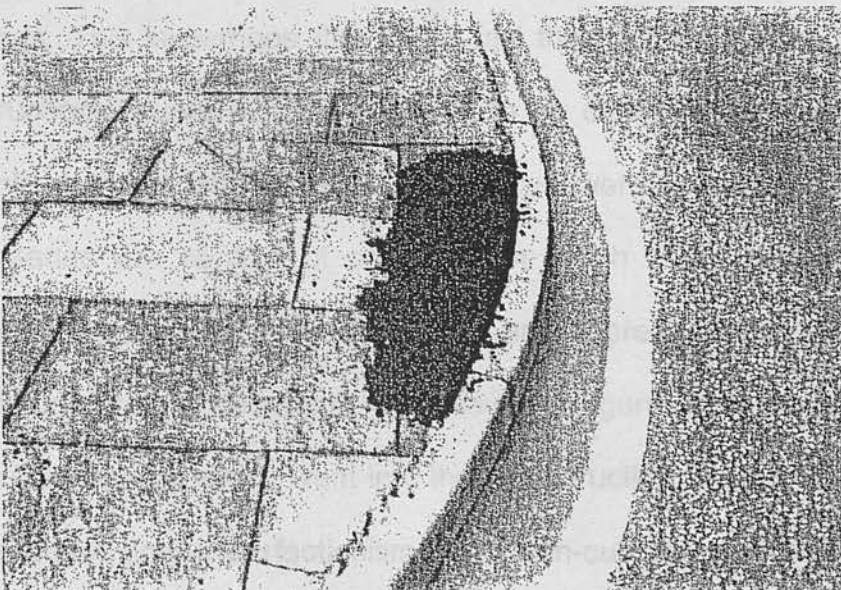


Figure 3 Screwdriver





**Figure 4 Road in Edinburgh**



**Figure 5 Road work in Edinburgh**



money to buy marbles, they may use old lemonade lids and fill them with mud and stone in order to lend them weight – in this way they can play marbles by virtue of their own creative resourcefulness ( Figure 6).

Such resourcefulness is not in the least self-conscious, it is just a natural response to the lack of ready-made appropriate materials.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful examples of this life style can be seen in Turkey. In the 1950s, the people who emigrated from the countryside to the urban areas started to build their own houses in order to provide shelter. They produced the first examples of the house type known as 'Gece Kondu' (shanty house – see Figure 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). As can be seen, the requisite features for a conventional building, such as smoothness of walls, solidity of staircases, angle of roof slopes and the like, have not been the foremost concern of the people who built these houses. What was important for them was the brute functionality of buildings. This is perhaps due to the fact that, as these were not legal constructions, these buildings needed to be constructed as quickly as possible at night time while the authorities were unaware. Once one understands the context of pressures in which these buildings were erected, they take on a certain stature and impressiveness with which one did not formerly see them – they have an organic form that speaks of the furious energy which went into their construction in stark contrast to the polished, boring perfectionism and clean-cut angles of legally built houses.

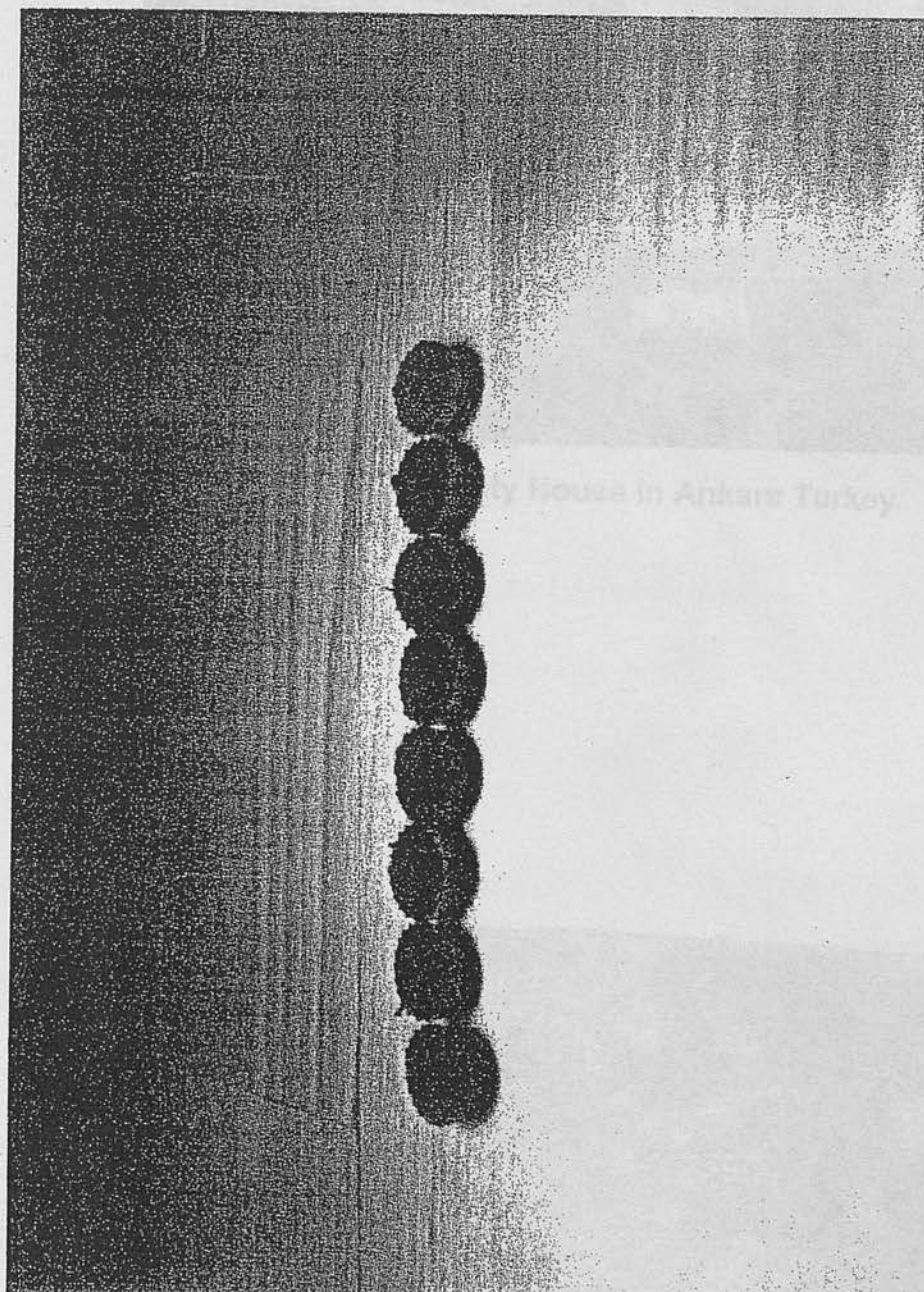


Figure 6 Bottle Tops and Earth



Figure 7. Shanty House in Ankara Turkey



Figure 8. Shanty House in Ankara Turkey



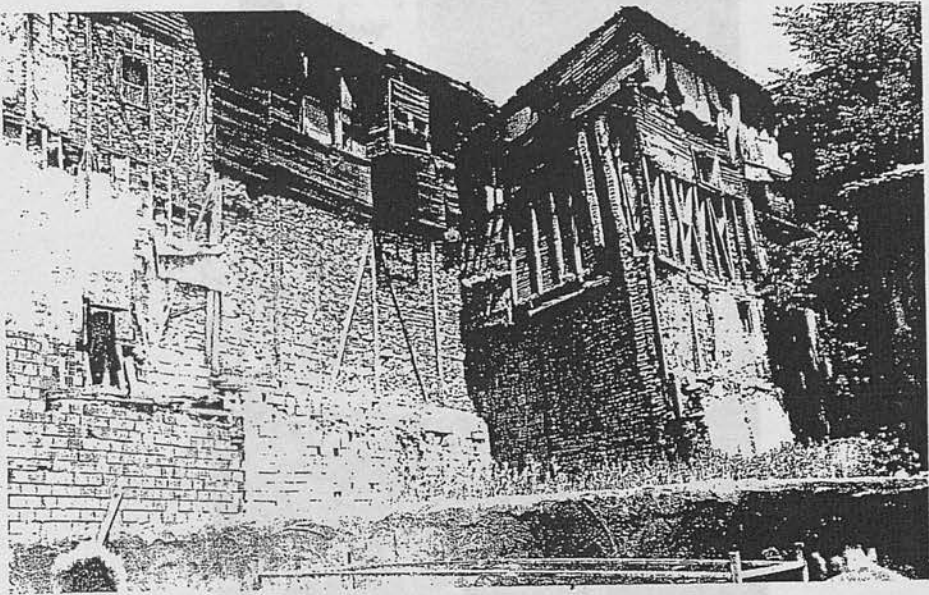


Figure 9. Shanty House in Turkey

Figure 11. Shanty House in Turkey Ankara

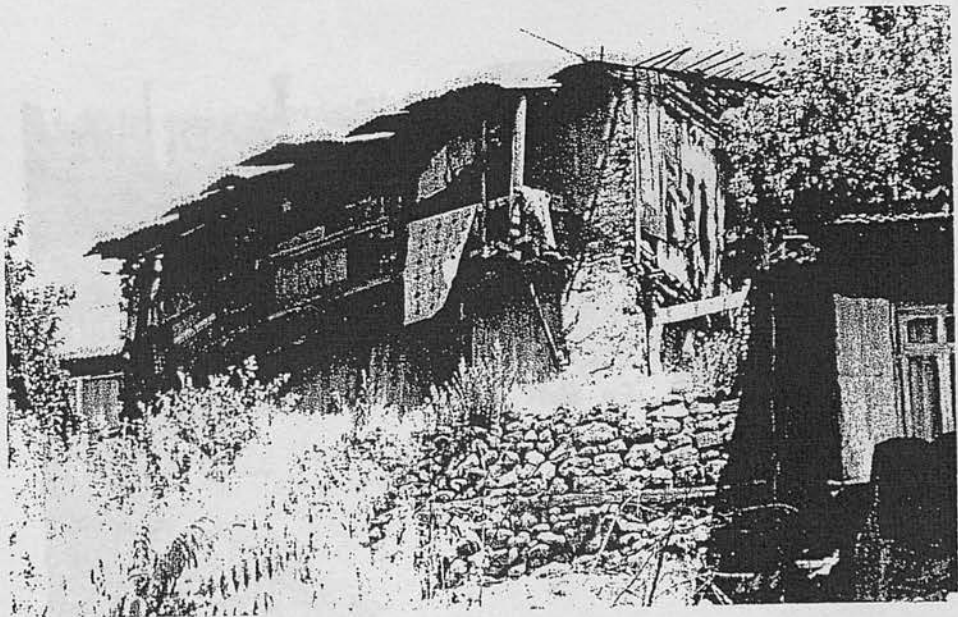


Figure 10. Shanty House in Turkey

Figure 12. Shanty House in Turkey Ankara

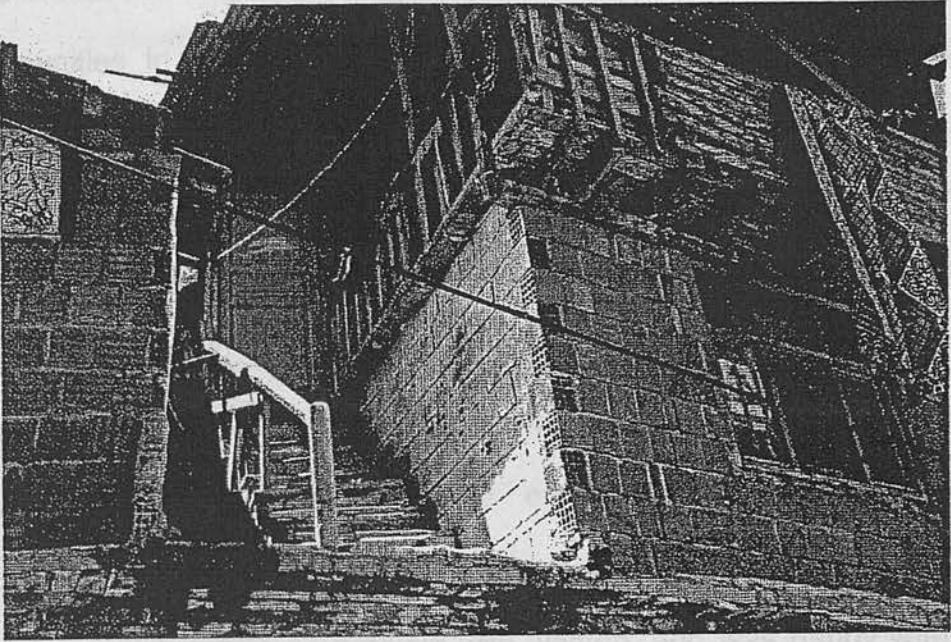




Figure 11. Shanty House in Turkey Ankara



Figure 12. Shanty House in Turkey Ankara



**Figure 13. Shanty house in Turkey Ankara**



**Figure 14. Shanty house in Turkey Ankara**

The sympathy which the author feels for the life style of the people who lived in these houses is in fact, a sympathy for the weak people and their communities in general. It calls for a lifestyle that requires a certain power of character in order that life is sustained in such fragile constructions. However, although the outside appearance of many of these houses may be somewhat dishevelled, their interior design is surprisingly orderly, with a certain house-proud quality. These people knew how the well-off people lived, even if they could not exactly match this themselves. Theirs is a life entirely full of tragedies and contradictions –as Federico Fellini, the Italian film director says: “the man has money, has no problem with women, and was happy with his job – but what does he care about my film?!” (Batur, 1992, p, 126)

The romantic, attractive side of a lifestyle full of tragedies and deficiencies has influenced a great many artists and thinkers like Fellini. Since the existing morality or state objectives do not provide an effective means of eliminating the deficiencies of such an impoverished lifestyle, the people determine their own naïve methods for solving their problems.

### **3.5 The duty of the artist; the origins of art**

Bruce Nauman, born 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana U.S.A. has been recognised since the early 1970 s as one of the most innovative and provocative of America's contemporary artists. Nauman finds inspiration in the activities, speech and material of everyday life. He observes that:



"I was talking to Peter Schjeldahl, he's a poet and critic, and we were talking about where the work came from and that we both felt that our work came a lot out of frustration and anger. It was the social situation, not so much out of specific personal incidents but out of the world or mores or any cultural dissatisfaction, or disjointedness or something, and it doesn't always appear that way in the work, I think. Somehow it generates work; it generates energy from the work" (Nauman, 1998, p127).

Nietzsche's doctrine for the creation of a sense of control and independence has a lot to do with the tragedy arising from the conflict between incompatible values held by the individual. Ionna Kucuradi proposes that Nietzsche is specifically concerned with tragedy as art, two of the most powerful instances of which are "Mark Anthony's situation is tragic because he has failed to defend himself despite his desire to live, whilst Brutus' actions are an instance of great tragedy because his love for Caesar was premised on his love of Rome, which Caesar threatened. Tragedy, according to Nietzsche, arises under circumstances when the motives for an individual's actions imply both an acceptance and rejection of the same treasured value" (Kucuradi, 1997, p.53).

For Nietzsche the art of living, being tragic, sometimes requires that something must collapse under the weight of truth in order for something new to develop. Truth and reason helps to destroy old lies and ideologies, but it is will to power, not truth or even rationality alone, that serves the creation of



new ideas. According to Nietzsche then, it is a good thing when one can see a growth in the virtues of truth among the people (criticism, scepticism etc) but it is not enough. There also has to be new creation through the will to power of individuals. For Nietzsche, freedom is to be found in this tragedy of destruction. A particularly fertile ground for this tragedy of destruction and creation to occur was Europe in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century which saw a growth in the capitalist organisation of society from the Industrial Revolution, resulting in increasing quality of life inequities between the classes. He saw great scope for the spread of nihilism – the disillusionment with all values – since, with capitalist restructuring, the formerly recognized and treasured values in European society were thenceforth denied to a great many people. Yet this denial of former European values allowed the space for the further development of the individual with his own set of peculiar values. Nehamas (1985) argues that, in accepting a predicament of having the formerly recognised values denied to them, weak people:

“could now will something; no matter at first to what end, why and with what they willed, the will itself was saved” (Nehamas, 1985, p124).

For Nietzsche, art represents a form of ‘truth’ (perhaps the highest form of truth available to human beings) in that; it discloses to individuals the sublime nature of their suffering, their pain, their foibles, and their failures. In this respect it enables them to continue to exist as moral beings in the face of the suffering and tragedy which characterize so much of the human existence of life. “Nietzsche holds that in the absence of the truth of art human beings are

overtaken by the moral nihilism, since suffering, cruelty, and so on, become unintelligible. Why do I suffer? (OGM III 27). Only when modern humanity feels the need for art will it become a spiritual humanity" (Pearson, 1994, p.59).

Yoko Ono emphasises the necessity of fine art whilst so much suffering occurs throughout the world. She asks what it is that artists can do for the world at large and finds that:

'The job of an artist is not to destroy, but to change the value of things. And by doing so, the artist can change the world into utopia where there is total freedom for everybody. Total communication equals peace. That is our aim. That is what artists can do for the world!' (Ono, 2000 p.76).

As seen in this example, Ono desires the equality of people across the world, but without recourse to anarchism. This is because a new system brought about by anarchism would be self-destructive in the same sense in which one speaks of 'violence begetting violence'. Instead of the advocacy of anarchism then, she envisages artistic duty as the task of creating new values from out of the existing order of things.

Marcel Duchamp's (1887-1968) legacy includes the insight that art can be about ideas instead of worldly things, an avant-garde concept that would resonate with later generations of artists.

The question Duchamp has asked is 'can one make works which are not works of art?' a question he answered within a year by his invention of the Ready-made-work of art which he later described as, 'without an artist to make it' in strictly Hegelian terms of a thesis (the thing) and anti-thesis (its opposite) and synthesis (the process of their unification), a work of art could be seen to represent the thesis; an object that is not a work of art its opposite or anti-thesis; why the ready-made succinctly combined these ideas in a single artifact, bringing about their reconciliation, or synthesis' (De Duve, 1991, p.57).

Max Stirner (1806-1856) was influenced by Hegel while he was doing his education in the Department of Philosophy, University of Berlin. He later became associated with the group of young Hegelians known as 'The Free Ones'. Duchamp first discovered Max Stirner, an obscure 19th century German philosopher, whose anarchistic theories may have provided the most extensive theoretical basis for Duchamp's new found artistic freedom. Duchamp was especially influenced by Stirner's work 'The individual and his own', which was the most important reference for his works. Stirner was an important pioneer in fighting against the social structure of society and he continued to defend this action against existing values, which he saw as the biggest enemy for individuality. These ideas inspired Duchamp's determination to undermine the then art world, bringing into question its very foundations, as shown in the 'Three Standard Stoppages of 1913-1914'.

Three Standard Stoppages is a question in a box. It asks whether things which we presume to be absolute, in this case, a standard unit of measure, might be merely arbitrary. The work consists of three painted canvas strips each one meter long and lined beside each other in a box. Onto them, from a height of one meter, Duchamp dropped three one-meter length of tailor's measuring thread, leaving them to rest on the canvas strips just as they fell, slightly out of true and warped (Figure 15). In overt paradox, the work also carefully records how it was made, although the lie of threads is not dependent on instruction; it is unrepeatable.

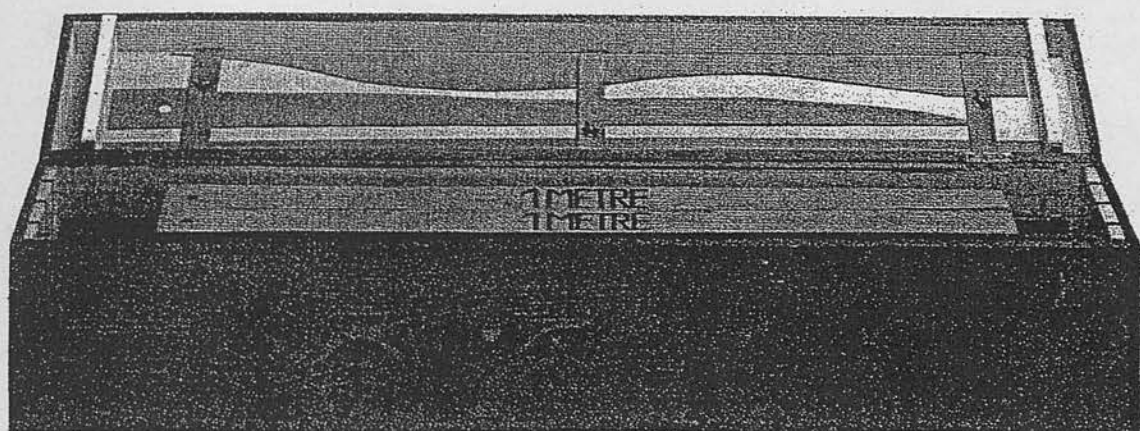
Duchamp wanted to capture the effect of chance on an everyday occurrence, just as Muybridge captured the effect of time on everyday motion. He called three Standard Stoppages "canned chance".

### **3.6 Conclusion: The hiding instinct**

Nietzsche's conception of tragic freedom, or freedom as the embrace of tragedy, finds expression in the ironic circumstance of weak people who, though they may be lacking in the security needed to advance and improve their lives, nevertheless live a life of creativity out of bare necessity.

There is a great number of people for whom this ironic picture holds true, and there is indeed an interesting parallel to this picture to be found in the relationship between the individual and crowd. The following quote confirms this phenomenon:





**Figure 15.**

Marcel Duchamp

*3 Standard Stoppages*

1913-1914, replica 1964, assemblage,

28 x 129 x 23 cm

(11 1/8 x 50 7/8 x 9 in).

Musée national d'art moderne, Paris.

Wrote a Parisian secret agent in 1798, "to maintain good behaviour in a thickly populated area where an individual is, so to speak, unknown to all others and thus does not have to blush in front of anyone. Here the masses appear as the asylum that shields an unsocial person from his persecutors. Of all the menacing aspects of the masses, this one became apparent first. It is at the origin of the detective story"...To Poe the Flaneur was, above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company, that is why he seeks out the crowd; the reason why he hides in it is probably close at hand. Poe purposely blurs the difference between the social person and the Flaneur. The harder a man is to find, the more suspicious he becomes. Refraining from a prolonged pursuit, the narrator quietly sums up his insight as follows: "The old man...is the type and genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd..." ( Benjamin, 1973, p40).

As with the necessity of destruction for creativity touched upon earlier, here we see that the individual gains new capacities for protecting and preserving his identity as an exercise of a kind of 'hiding instinct', just as this identity becomes at once swamped and submersed in the anonymity of the crowd. Yet it is not only the identity of the crowd, but history itself may be preserved whilst lost in the crowd of images and thrown away cultural relics.

In the Introduction part of the Turkish translation of Walter Benjamin's book "Love at Last Glance" (Son Bakışta Aşk), Nurdan Gurbilek summarise the thoughts of Walter Benjamin about the past:

"Walter Benjamin considered the past not as a treasure to be transferred to the future generations, but as a wreckage. He aimed to collect the consumed and thrown away objects and cultural ruins instead of looking for the values that provide the continuity of the culture. He tried to explore the image of the history in the most rubbed out objects. He tried to detect images of history through the most rubbed out objects. He was looking for the things that enlightened the environment for the last time while losing their material being and also the things which were enlightened under this light for the last time. A pessimistic and desperate perspective, but a belief as well" (Gurbilek, 1993 p,37).

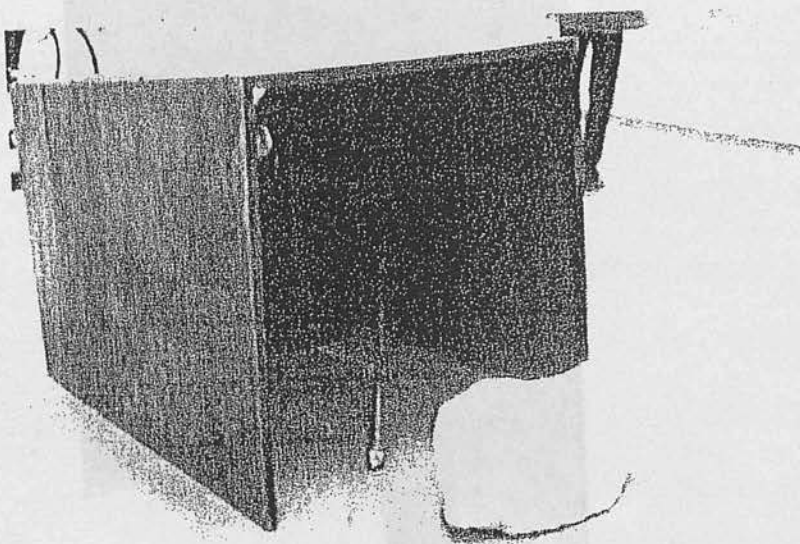
Walter Benjamin tried to detect hidden images of history in the most rubbed-out objects; the similarities and differences between the elements from the literary expression, and the objects or notions that form the essence of other art disciplines will inevitably survive, though in hidden forms. As Walter Benjamin states: "every expression of the spiritual life of mankind can be perceived as a language; as to the presentation made by means of the words...this is only a special case from which the human language and its derivatives (law, poetry, etc) are constructed"(Gurbilek,1993,p,169).

The problems and possible solutions raised by philosophers in connection with the weak people of society tend to have their own particular style of research and discourse. The same point also applies to the particular style of an artist who deals with the matter in the field of visual arts. For example, in contrast to the work of a literary author who uses words and ideas to facilitate the creation of a visual image of a scene in the readers' imagination, the visual artist must do things the other way around and use an actual three-dimensional image in his own peculiar style with the hope of still exciting the audience's unconscious 'hiding instinct'.

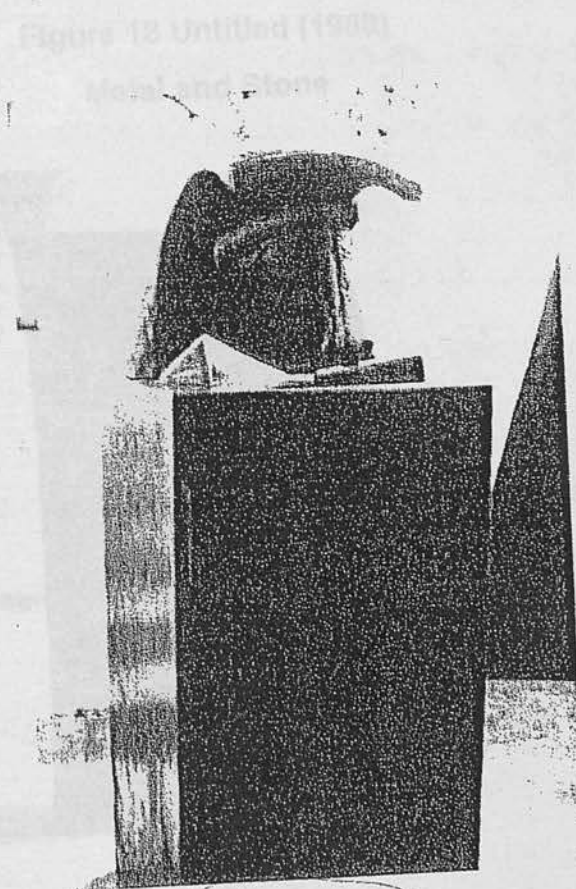
However, that the tools and materials used in the visual arts have a peculiar language and style that requires a close reading cannot be understated. Associations between the language of the visual materials and certain intellectual ideas can sometimes be strained; the visual arts have their own particular styles, problems, solutions and research areas – they are not merely a tool for the expression of intellectual ideas on social issues.

The interpretation of events or works of art naturally differs from person to person with unconscious psychological differences playing some role no doubt. The author has chosen sculpture as a way of expressing his spiritual life. In particular, the production of -closed forms- (Figures 16, 17, 18, 19) during the author's undergraduate education years was

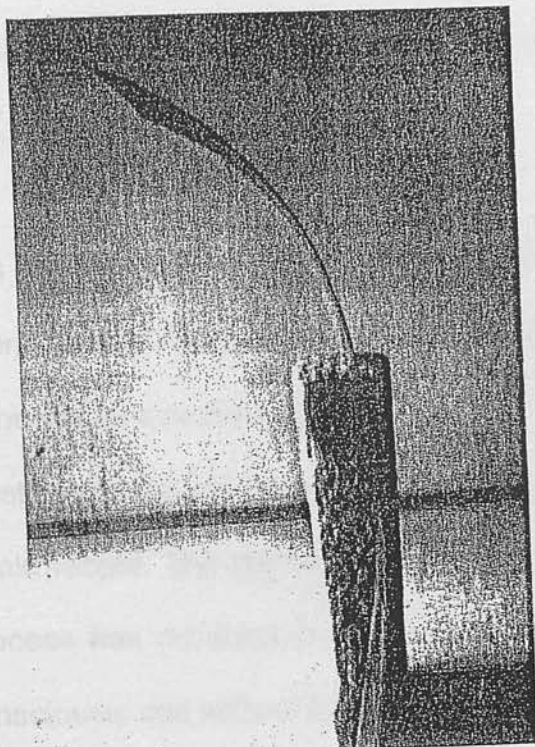




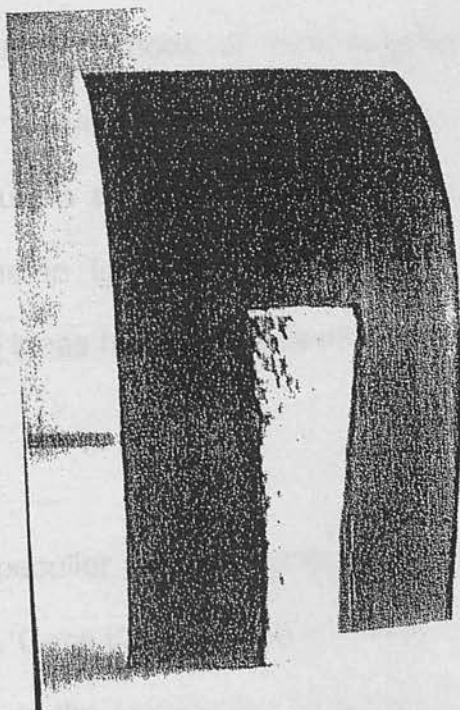
**Figure 16 Untitled (1989)**  
**Stone, metal and Bronze**



**Figure 17 Untitled (1990)**  
**Metal and Bronze**



**Figure 18 Untitled (1989)**  
**Metal and Stone**



**Figure 19 Untitled (1989)**  
**Metal and Stone**

perhaps an unconscious and coded expression of personal identity, itself another operation of the hiding instinct.

As Nietzsche points out "even the weak points might seem beautiful for the artistry" (Pearson, 1994 p, 134) the hiding instinct which is described as a weakness in the social structure has constituted an image creation process in the artistry due to my interest in the life style and social products of the weak people. The starting point and the long time span involved in this process has occurred in a period in which works have been created unconsciously and without following a strategy.

Differences in the creativity or viewpoints of individuals result in different solutions or efforts toward solving the problems which deviate from the known and accepted methods of problem-solving. Moreover, such deviation in terms of functional problem-solving almost certainly, and unconsciously, result in aesthetic deviations from popular taste. Such aesthetic deviations in turn provide a fertile ground for artists and designers to derive ideas from as to new and unusual combinations uses of materials.

No matter the peculiar psychological process that contribute to construction of the 'Gece Kondu', there is a certain inevitability to novelty being produced from the immigration of people from the countryside to the urban areas and their adaptation to or resistance against the unfamiliar and unattainable order of things around them.

## **Part 3. Praxis**

### **Chapter 4. Nihilism in praxis**

#### **4.1 Literature as a bridge to materialise the theory of nihilism**

“Every mind has its own structure and Marx acknowledges this by asserting that the production of art is historically bound up with certain forms of social development” (Fuller, 1980 p. 234). It is certain that individuals display differences relative to their social structures and, in turn, understand their environment within the confines of this specific knowledge. In other words, individuals, no matter what their opinions, are very much shaped by their social context. It inspires their contentment, disappointments, aggressions, likes, dislikes and need or lack of need for refuge and self-expression. To know the opinions of the individuals is thus to learn about the two very different fields whose coupling creates two opinions – the society and the individual.

Because this is essentially a narrative phenomenon, the author considers that it is best expressed in literature, much of it, which is developed to the dynamic interaction of individual and society.

Tobias Smollett's novel *Humphrey Clinker* (1871) is a good example. It provides an account of the possible relationship existing between social contexts and particular value systems. For instance, one of the characters, old Matthew



Bramble, says of Bath: "you must know, I find nothing, but, disappointment in Bath, which is so altered that I can scarce believe it is the same place that I frequented about thirty years ago. Here there is nothing but, noise, tumult and hurry with the fatigue and restraint of maintaining a demeanour, more stiff, formal and oppressive than the etiquette of a German elector. A national hospital it may be, but, one would imagine that none but, lunatics are admitted; and truly, I will give you leave to call me so, if I stay much longer in Bath" (quoted in Gokturk, 1980 p,114).

Conversely, young, emotional Lydia Melfrod, another character in that novel, observes about the same: "Bath is to me a new world- all is safety, good-humor and diversion: the eye is continually entertained with the splendor of dress and equipage; and the ear with the sound of coaches, chaises, chairs, and other carriages. The merry bells ring round from morning till night" (in Gokturk, 1980 p,114).

Another perspective is offered by the maiden Winifred Jones, when she states:

"O Molly! You that live in the country have no conception of our doings in Bath. Here there is such dressing, and fiddling and dancing, and gadding and courting and plotting- O gracious! If God had not given me a great deal of discretion, what a power of things might I reveal, concerning old mistress and young mistress" (in Gokturk, 1980 p, 114).

Aksit Gokturk (1980) says that the values of individuals living within a society and the criteria for these values provide useful insight as to how individuals perceive life in general. Karl Marx develops this notion by suggesting that the social status of individuals may be the most important factor in determining social perceptions.

The preceding excerpts from Smollet's novel introduce the reader to three individuals of different personality and social status and attempt to illustrate how this status, and subjective reality, has a direct bearing on their judgement of Bath. This rule, of course, could be extended to every individual on the planet, for we live the life we create according to social context. Tobias Smollet (1871) describes this as "an unavoidable situation for mankind in every stage of life".

The letter written in 1871 determines an important stage in the style of writing a novel, where the new writing strategies of narrative and text began to emerge. However, the skill of presenting subjective realities is not new and every field of art in different time periods can be seen to do just this according to their traditional and idiosyncratic means.

#### **4.2 The past and its place in creative work**

Such appreciations, as discussed above, are only an attempt to represent experiences, beliefs and ethics through time. As Marcel Proust writes "And I

understood that all these materials for a work of literature were my past life” (Time Regained, cited in Nehamas 1985 p.x).

He emphasises the process of creating products and the strong relationship between the past, present and future within an individual's inner world.

Maurice Blanchot (1907) describes the past and present as “the appraisal of art, this is because it is a research, it is clear, but, it takes the life with the aspect of unknown or being blur as a subject researched”. From this infers: “Firstly, in order to write one sentence someone's life should be consumed. Secondly, in order to write one sentence, the art should be consumed” (Blanchot, 1993 p, 177).

The past determines the present, and the conjunction of these forms a preparation for the future, while, of course, is unknown and undetermined.

It would seem, then, that, in all time periods, individuals explain phenomena of their time according to their social knowledge. Nihilism exists unconsciously in the mind of the individuals as alienation or existentialism. It could be thought of as a natural process in individuals' attempts to structure and find meaning in the future and the unknown.

The skills of the literary writer provide more than just knowledge of the craft, for the readers are often transported through time and space and given the opportunity to project themselves into someone else's shoes for a period of time. Their existing attitudes and prejudices are, potentially, open to deeper analysis as a result of this vicarious experience. The more information they get, the more knowledgeable they are, and perhaps the more capable too. The power of literature could be said to exist in its ability to provide a multidimensional picture of mankind's existence.

The Turkish author Bilge Karasu, 'Six Months and a Fall' writes *"All I want to write about is the sea - the patience of the emeralds, the sapphire; the trees that have no history...The tales of the sea, and its shores of which we can comprehend only one, and even that is not possible for the landsman. Whether our voyages are real or dreamlike, if they end on some other shore and whether someone else lives and works on it. The sea not only destroys boundaries but even the idea of boundaries within the landsman. It is the beginning or the end of togetherness somewhere. All I wanted to write about was the sea, knowing I'd be defeated by the togetherness of everything"* (Bilge Karasu, 1995, p. 9 translated from Turkish by Zeynep Malu). This text highlights the author's position of being moved, even excited, by a piece of tragic poetry. The competitive spirit which arises, however, rather than being praised, may be seen only in terms of a human failing to engage with the patience and calmness of nature.



This desire is articulated further through the author's sculptures. Does this challenge or venerate nature itself? Indeed, one wonders, if a rivalry rather than a harmony is generated between nature's creations and those of man?

Entering into competition where the odds of success are stacked against you, could be seen as foolhardy, however, nothing ventured nothing gained! If the aforementioned author did not challenge nature's labours, would he have been able to write that poem? Even though the contest may have been lost, ironically success is evident in the perfect way his failure was expressed.

This situation echoes the tragic events surrounding the story of Abraham. Unquestioning devotion to God compelled Abraham to take his son Isaac to the mountain of Moriah for sacrifice. However, at the moment when Abraham lifted the sacrificial knife, God spares Abraham the sacrifice of his child. Kiergaard says "if he did not lift his knife, he could have lost his son" No-one loses in this example, but the tragedy of Abraham's plight is clear from the outset. Doctrines are created by mankind and individual beliefs can be borrowed or rejected but the main challenge is to maintain the desire to develop such beliefs.

Bilge Karasu's quotation inspired the writer to find a material which would accurately reflect the same meaning in his own sculptures as the mighty sea holds for Karasu. The chosen material was that of 'coal'; a medium which has inspired wonder in the writer throughout childhood. A coal stove was the norm in

heating a Turkish home on cold winter evenings. Historically, coal became important during the industrial Revolution but, of course, the increased production was not without cost both on individual and environmental levels.

Television coverage was replete with reports about miners losing their lives in coal pits or people dying from coal smoke inhalation. It was thus that the author received his early, strong impressions from coal and was later to make much use of coal. During the author's high school education in the natural science class he learnt the history of coal, its transformation to diamond and the most remarkable knowledge was when diamond burns nothing remains from it. Yet coal has other properties, a beauty of its own, a sheen that no other stone exhibits, an intensity in its blackness and a unique way of fracturing or staining anything that touches it. It is plant-life turned to stone and sometimes the prints of strange and beautiful leaves from another geological era can be found in coal, furthermore, it can be seen as a stage towards the creation of diamond. When the sculptor Tony Smith painted his metal, cube black and named it: 'Die', his reasoning was based on the waiting game necessary to produce a diamond from coal. To him, this evoked to mankind's maturation and the process of producing energy from coal which signifies the meaning of existence to extinction.

The author made a sculpture 10 years ago that reflected the meaning of the issues mentioned above. The sculpture consisted of a six-stepped metal ladder and a lace clad human figure lying on the steps of the ladder filled with pieces of coal. On the top step, a ball of moulded coal and glass was built. This conveyed

the realisation for the author that coal, as a material, signifies patience and never loses this meaning over aeons .

The psychological process by which works of art are produced may often be unconscious. One of the author's recent sculptures – 'Chair and Coal' – seems in retrospect to have arisen from the synthesis of a distant memory of the 'Throne and Diamond' image in the Topkapi Palace (Figure 20,21) in Istanbul and an ongoing interest in the improvisational use of materials by the weak people living in 'Gece Kondu' (shanty house). The obvious parallel is that both 'Chair and Coal' and 'Throne and Diamond' are structurally similar although there is a difference in the value status of the materials used in each respectively. The unconscious fusion of a memory with an object of concurrent interest to produce a new work of art has perhaps its most famous instance in Francis Bacon's 'Screaming Pope' in which Bacon's unconscious memory of the image of Pope Innocent X became fused with his fascination with a film still of a screaming nurse from Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 film 'The Battleship Potemkin'(Figure 22,23).

The actual 'Chair and Coal' sculpture (Figure 24) when placed in juxtaposition with the 'Throne and Diamond' image may suggest certain ideas about time and the process of transformation; the transformation of coal into diamond over the millennia; the gradual transformation of a humble seat or position in society to



**Figure 20. Sultan Ahmet III  
and his son.  
The miniature painting by  
Levi**



**Figure 21. The Spoon-Maker's Diamond weighs 86 carats and is  
embedded in Silver,  
surrounded by 49 smaller diamonds. It was purchased by Sultan  
Mehmet IV in the late  
17<sup>th</sup> Century.**





Figure 22. Close-up of Nurse from Sergei Eisenstein's film, *The Battleship Potemkin*, 1925



Figure 23. Diego Velasquez Portrait of Pope Innocent X

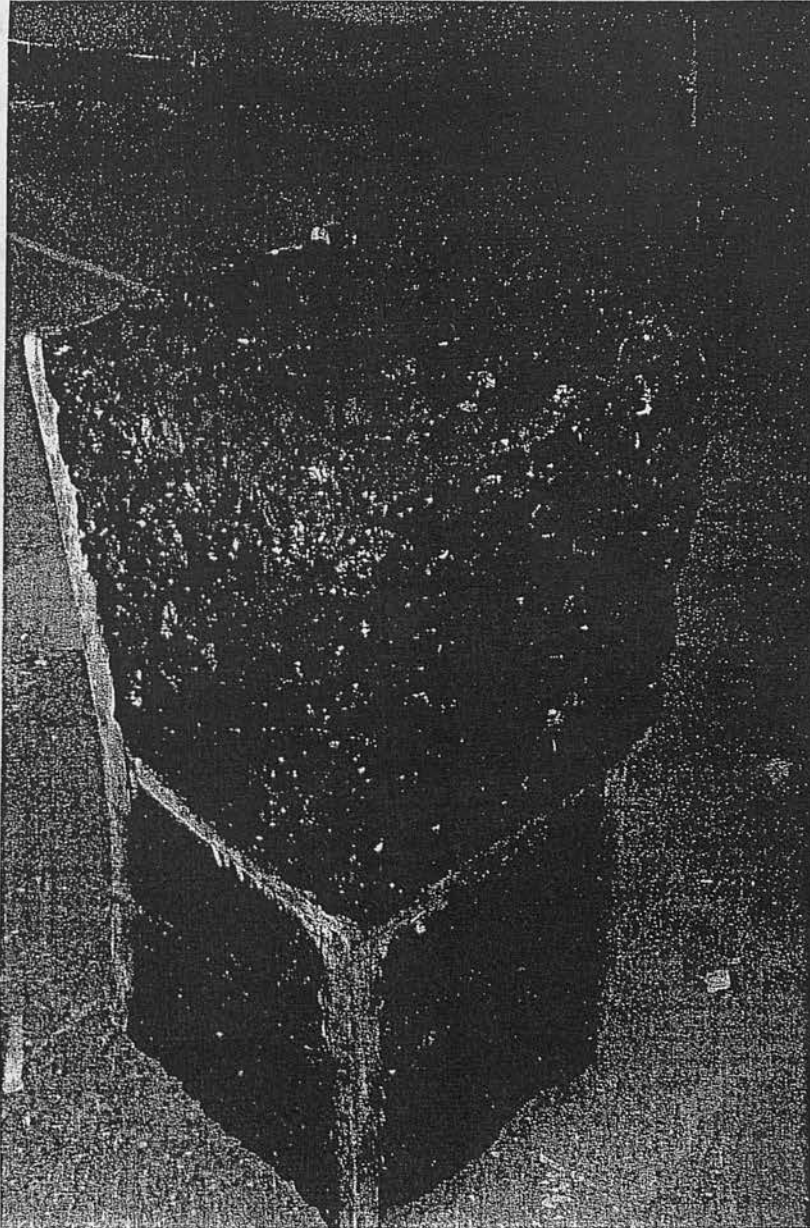


Figure 24. Chair- Coal, wood (1998) Orhan Tekin

one of grandeur and splendor; the time necessary for a rise in the living standards of the weak people to occur.

Appreciating the qualities of coal and the profound representations possible was a significant stage in the development of the writer's work.

The above example is an attempt to explain the writer's thought processes which culminated in sculptures. Furthermore, it seeks to clarify the influence of these thoughts on the development of the author's personal philosophy and interests.

#### **4.3 Nihilism and function**

While architectural forms in our daily life might have extraordinary dimensions or different shapes, their common function is their existence in the same places where people can live and work. It is possible to say the same thing for the furniture. The size, form, length or material of two tables might be different, but they serve just one aim; as an object that meets the needs and human usage. In the author's sculpture furniture has lost its conventional value and function as an expression of nihilism.

There might be nuances in the height of the tables, but generally they are not designed with the dimensions of a table's functions, considering the level of the table with the chair in order to meet the requirements of the people. If a table is

made of standard or average dimensions, and if it does not serve its purpose, then the standard meaning behind the purpose of making this table becomes irrelevant. That is to say, the user in the orbit of realising a different meaning to a familiar object.

Bringing furniture to a place where a person lives in may indicate the fact that he or she is the owner of this place or usually lives there, as well as indicating his or her economical conditions, or their inclinations of taste and choice. Making or presenting a table bigger than its normal size is one of the things that an artist may do.

This very expression can be interpreted in the way that the artist might have presented the table as being different from its ordinary form as furniture, or presented for a different purpose in order to draw the attention generate a response from an audience. Furniture, including tables, is one category of familiar objects that the author uses to express these notions.

A table, the things around or on the table, and the usage of the table, altogether have a meaning for the author. Therefore, if he uses a table in a sculpture, He would have to consider what size to make the table. So far, the sizes of the tables that have been used were not different from a normal size (life size). The reason is the hope that the audience can realise that part of a composite work; a table that can be used, which has been used or which will be used. The one



exception is of a table sculpture which was fictionalised as a corner table. There was a table at the corner, a plate on the small corner of the table, coals piled up over the plate, and a woman's bust crushed under its weight (Figure 25). Because the author used a woman bust a thing belonging to a human being in this sculpture, he was attentive of the height of the table. In other words, he aimed at a height between the height of a normal table and the average height of a woman. Therefore, the so-called table statue was somewhat higher than the standard size of a table.

It can be seen, therefore, that the author is trying to use normal materials, which carry with them a host of received and familiar meanings and values. Yet the usage to which he puts them, while evoking conventional values, also subverts them and opens up new interpretations. In the sculpture cited above, the coal is not for burning; the plate is not for eating off; the table cannot function as a table etc. And these materials and objects, which form such a usual background to human life, have become unusual materials.

As is seen in the above example, the togetherness and the unity of the unusual materials are considered as usual things that we frequently observe in our daily life, which normally do not receive undue attention.

The unusual materials, resembles the methods and techniques mentioned in the previous chapter (3) concerning the poor people who re-function and repair the

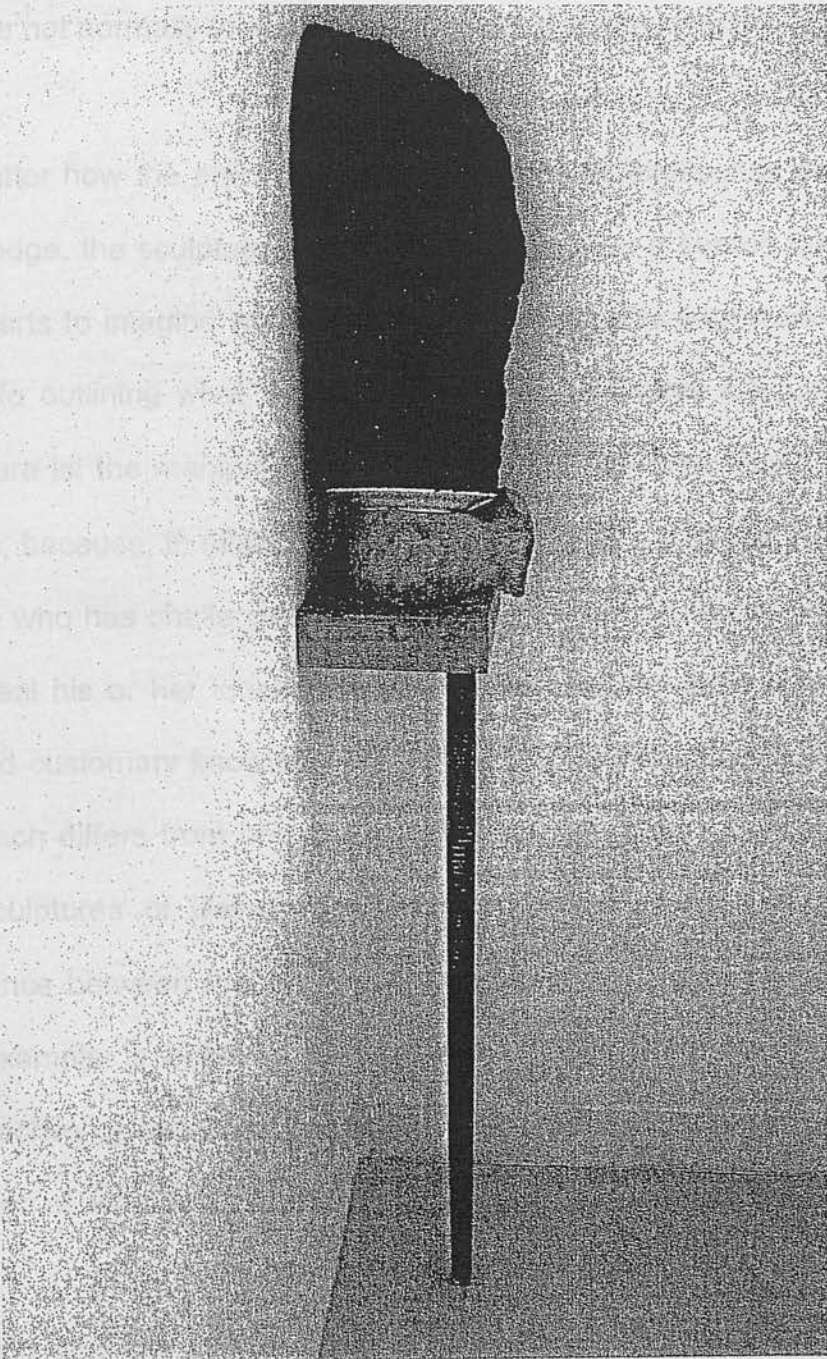


Figure 25. Bust- Coal, plate, latex  
(2000) Orhan Tekin

tools and materials which have lost their initial functions. This is representative of the common incentive of using tools and materials together that are not normally thought of as functioning in combination.

No matter how the practical of sculpture requires intellectual experience and knowledge, the sculpture actually begins whenever a person takes a material and starts to imagine what to do with it. The notions expressed above come close to outlining what the author believes constitutes a sculpture, or what sculpture is: the manipulation of materials in three dimensions to reveal new values, because, in nihilist terms, these new values express the will-to-power of one who has challenged socially prevalent ideologies, stripped them away to reveal his or her lonely, unprotected self and earned the strength to see beyond customary knowledge. Of course, in the written field of sculpture the approach differs from one artist to another. It would be enough even to see the sculptures of David Nash and Jeff Koons in order to recognise the difference between their viewpoints on sculpture. The author's aim in giving this example is because he considers the different viewpoints and free approaches of each artist as being more important than the answer to the question of what is sculpture.

The richness and aesthetic of the arts is that the artists who have different styles and methods have the same target, which is creating works of art, yet they take to this task different attitudes, different values, different contexts and thus different truths.



Any impact may result in very different reactions. That is why the elements that influence the author's creative process must be defined. The people who seek to repair and remake the tools and materials by using primitive methods are included in this definition. It is possible to meet such examples especially in an impoverished society.

To summarise, the incentive of making and creating something which is an inborn human skill of human beings, has always impressed me, especially the methods and techniques used by the poor people who are disadvantaged in a material sense. Their 'disadvantaged' state propels them to a more intensive use of their will-to-power, as this is their strongest resource. Consequently, their will-to-power is released; it is no longer potential, but active. It becomes the engine for creating alternative instead of existing values. Poor people, whether consciously or unconsciously, drift apart from the existing laws by means of supporting their basic requirements and realising their individual skills in almost every field of life.

Just as do the expressive works of an artist, the methods used by the poor in their struggle to live and cover basic requirements differ from person to person. It could be said that such life styles are a result of the willpower, as the willpower itself is the choice of individuals in their pursuit of a happy life. The comments on a sculpture may differ from person to person. What is important is to know what sort of world illustration the artist wants to draw. The comments should not turn



around the orbit of this definition, although the so-called world illustration is known.

#### **4.3.1 The hiding instinct as nihilism in praxis**

The concept of the hiding instinct, which is physically represented in my sculpture should not be confused with the instinct protection.

From the author's point of view although it shares many characteristics with the hiding instinct, protection is not a development of physical weakness but a display of physical strength. It uses might and power – or rather the outward appearance, and often pretence, of might and power-to intimidate and deter enemies. Examples in nature include the British hoverfly that imitates the colors of a wasp to deter predators or the sudden swelling up of a puffer-fish that faces danger. To build a huge fortress is an action motivated by the protection instinct, as is the development and declaration of a nuclear arsenal in political terms. As is clear from these examples, they all involve visibility and the outward expression of impregnability or retaliation.

The hiding instinct represents the opposite: to vanish from sight, like nocturnal creatures who have learned through evolutionary experience that in the darkness of the night they become invisible to many predators. It means to shrink, to shed colors, to recede, as the Flaneur in a crowd, and, in doing so, to create for the

self a small haven in the world wherein the personality and the individual will-to-power becomes sovereign.

The author used two different groups of materials in his sculpture; the first group includes furniture and the objects that people usually observe around them in daily life; the other group includes coal and bone, hidden materials that people are not accustomed to seeing. Two opposite groups of materials: one is hidden, the other one is what people are used to seeing every day.

The author wonders whether his sculptures are the products of his imagination, the physical or material representations of the tragedy and alienation, especially the tragedy which is based on the necessity of making a choice. The answer is covered behind the fact that the necessity of making a choice occurs when confronted by opposite alternatives which are incompatible. The tragedy comes to the stage whenever two alternatives are presented and he or she is required to make a choice. If there is no necessity to make a choice, then he or she should not talk about tragedy.

However, the juxtaposition of two different materials may not comprise the elements of tragedy every time. For that reason, the author used coal (this represents patience for the author) and bone (which represents death and non-existence) and a representation of the conditions under which people carry on their struggle.

The very choice is between living or not living, activation or inactivation; and the fragile and weak lives created by these choices as Nietzsche says, evolve around turning *"one's weaknesses into an artistic plan, until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye"* (Pearson, 1994 p.134). The author has considered this point of view as a fundamental element of the sculpture which he has created so far.

However, these discussions still leave some questions unanswered: How does meaning and meaningfulness manage to infiltrate constructions that emerge from necessity; how do artifacts created by 'accident' and hardship evoke rich messages about a person's life and society?

There is an often-repeated anecdote that holds that Leonardo de Vinci was inspired to envisage a parachute by noticing a stain on a wall. But clearly the stain in itself was not meaningful, and the inspiration, although triggered by it, was not contained within the stain nor subconsciously intended out of making the stain. This was purely accidental.

The following chapter therefore attempts to answer these questions. It proposes three mechanisms as follows: Serendipity, spontaneity and innuendo.

Serendipity, explains how new meanings arise through the realization that apparently unrelated phenomena can be seen to intersect and that fresh insights

spring forth from these intersections. Serendipity most often arises without the prior intention of the maker of the artifact, as in the case of a stain on the wall that invokes the idea of a 'parachute' in Leonardo de Vinci's mind.

Spontaneity. The notion of spontaneity suggests that when a person acts 'without thinking' and without a plan', their actions are free from the conventional constraints that fill conscious, deliberate thinking. Subconsciously, or Dionysian in Nietzsche's terminology, and intuitive ways of making or doing come to the surface and these express more earthy, authentic and natural truths about the person.

Innuendo. Innuendo is perhaps the most complex of the three mechanisms, in that it implies a fruitful halfway stage between conscious and unconscious thought. It is the realm of suggestion, of needing to express something that is perhaps embarrassing or taboo, but without taking the risk of expressing it explicitly. An example of this from the author's own work could be the hiding instinct. Before the author became conscious of this, and sufficiently emboldened to state it directly in his writings, many of his sculptures and drawings adopted a cringing or cowering posture, with much use made of new-identifiable motifs such as the covering shields and the small, scared space or figure protected by it.



## Chapter 5. Nihilism and decision

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers discussion on how a piece of the author's own artwork comes into existence is in order: the relationship between himself and the material world plays a pivotal role in his creations. This relationship is one of sharing the same space, and in doing so, impacting character, essence and meaning to materials. The process of transforming them into an artwork entails a change of their meaning, importance and use. At the design stage, he sees the work first as a fledgling notion that then takes flight spontaneously, without forcing the imagination. The constructed form usually just dawns upon me when I am not giving it conscious thought.

### 5.2 Serendipity

The stage of sketching the idea onto paper is not one of trying to create or refine the idea, but of giving it a rapid foothold in the non-imaginary, material world. In the classical tradition of sculpting, the drawing or draught modeling process is pursued to a greater level of accuracy, solving all the formal 'problems' before the sculpture is begun, then a material (such as marble) selected that has the ability to have this perfected idea imprinted upon it by craftsmen. It could be said that the sculptor is the master of the material, and the material, other than conveying the master's idea, is mute.

the sculpture is begun, then a material (such as marble) selected that has the ability to have this perfected idea imprinted upon it by craftsmen. It could be said that the sculptor is the master of the material, and the material, other than conveying the master's idea, is mute.

The author has developed a completely opposite path. He selects materials – broken crockery, old furniture, bone and coal, for example that do not bend obediently to human intention and, in the course of construction, throw up challenges of their own. In other words, the materials are allowed to contradict and reconfigure the artistic intention and the sculptor accepts a position of weakness relative to them, and one of listening to them. In nihilist terms, the author devalues his false power (the ideology of the perfectly anticipated found product), recognizes his own shortcomings and thus allows new values and truths to emerge.

## 5.2 Serendipity\*

This chapter is an attempt to show how this process, which could be called 'Nihilism in praxis' leads to finished products that convey the initial concept yet, at the same time, communicate new values and meanings of which, in many cases, the author himself had no prior knowledge. It distinguishes three main components to the process – serendipity, spontaneity and innuendo.

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\* The author first met with the definition of Serendipity in the Bilge Karasu's book 'Ne kedisiz Ne Kitapsiz'(1994). The quote is as follows: " There is word in English, acquired in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, derived from the tale of 'Three Princess of *Serendip* (today's Sri Lanka)'. Serendipity refers to an instance where a precious or pleasant thing is discovered unexpectedly, even though it has not been sought after. Of course, it is not exactly possible to discover something which is not sought after. Yet if think of 'not being sought after' as 'not being sought after at that particular moment', then we concede that many people have had their (big or small) share in serendipity. As for me, the rains of *Serendip* did indeed rain on my fields every now and then. (Translated by Sebnem Susam Sarajevo).

Refer to Serendipity that historical event suggest that "Three Princes of Serendip", from which the word serendipity derives. However the author agrees that "one is unlikely to find something that is not sought after" (Karasu, 1994, p,9).

'The exotic tale, told of princes ancient of Sri Lanka, then known as Serendip, inspired Horace Walpole, the English novelist (e.g, The Casle of Otranto), politician, and 'Serendipity' while writing to the British diplomat, Horace Mann, in January 28, 1754. Walpole created serendipity to refer to the combination of accident sagacity in recognizing the significance of discovery(Remer 1965, pp.6-7)

The story of 'The Three Princes of Serendip' ;

In ancient times there existed in the country of Serendippo, in the Far East, a great and powerful king by the name of Giaffer. He had three sons who were very dear to him. And being a good father and concerned about their education, he decided that he had to leave them endowed not only with great power, but also with all kinds of virtues of which princes are particularly in need.

In order to provide the best tutors for his sons, the king travels throughout the island until he finds a number of scholars, each specialized in a different field, 'And to them he entrusted the training of his sons, with the understanding that the best they could do for him was to reach them in such a way that they could be immediately recognized as his very own;

As three princes are endowed with great intelligence, they soon become highly trained in the arts and sciences. However, when the tutors inform the king of his sons' achievements, he is skeptical. So he summons his eldest son and announces that he wishes to retire to a monastery and that his son should succeed him as ruler. The eldest son politely refuses, insisting that his father is wiser and should reign until his death. The two younger sons also refuse when commanded in a similar manner.

Although the king is astonished by the wisdom displayed by his sons, he decides to send them on a prolonged journey so that they can acquire empirical experience. He summons his sons and, giving the impression of being angry and disappointed because they have all disobeyed him, banishes them from Serendip. "Thus they started their peregrination and moved out of his kingdom until they reached the kingdom of a great and powerful emperor, whose name was Beramo".

Misfortune befalls the princes when a camel driver stops them on the road and ask them if they have seen one of his camels. Although they have not, they have noticed signs that suggest a camel has passed along the road. Ever ready to dazzle with their wit and sagacity, the princes mystify the camel driver by asking him if the lost camel is blind in one eye, missing a tooth and lame. The camel driver, impress by the accuracy of the description, immediately hurries off in pursuit of the animal.



After a fruitless search, and feeling deceived, he returns to the princes, who reassure him by supplying further information. The camel, they say, carried a load of butter on one side and honey on the other, and was ridden by a pregnant woman. Concluding that the princes have stolen the camel, the driver has them imprisoned. It is only after the driver's neighbor finds the camel that they are released.

The princes are brought before Emperor Beramo, who asks them how they could give such an accurate description of a camel they had never seen. It is clear from the princes' reply that they had brilliantly interpreted the scant evidence observed along the road.

As the grass had been eaten on one side of the road where it was less verdant, the princes deduced that the camel was blind to the other side. Because there were lumps of chewed grass on the road size of a camel's tooth, presumably they had fallen through the gap left by a missing tooth. The tracks showed the prints of only three feet, the fourth being dragged, indicating that the animal was lame. That butter was carried on one side of the camel and honey on the other was clear because ants had been attracted to melted butter on one side of the road and flies to spilled honey on the other.

The deduction regarding the pregnant rider is more complicated than the rest and is somewhat lewd, so I shall let the princes tell it themselves: "I guessed that the camel must have carried a woman," said the second brother, "because I had noticed that near the tracks where the animal had knelt down the print of a foot

was visible. Because some urine was near by, I wet my fingers (in it) and as a reaction to its odour. I felt a sort of carnal concupiscence, which convinced me that the imprint was of a woman's foot."

"I guessed that the same woman must have been pregnant," said the third, "because I had noticed nearby handprints which were indicative that the woman, being pregnant, had helped herself up with her hands while urinating."

That essay examines Serendipity in the fields of sociology, anthropology and science. But it's possible to apply this idea to any research field.

Serendipity in research methods is examined in the same way as Newton's discovery of gravity, Fleming's penicillin discovery, Tombaugh's discovery of Pluto etc. An analogy can be drawn between the stories of the 'Three Princes of Serendip'. In short, Serendipity as research method is told that "Courting Serendipity and involves planned insight married to unplanned events" (Fine, G and Deegan, J 1994. p.6).

### 5.3 Imagination and form

We realize our creative achievement when we try to create the harmony of meaning in our life. It is the part of our life collecting data consciously or unconsciously to help to understand our awareness of ourselves. To be selective and to synthesize all the data that has been collected is the process of design.

To fill up the gap or expand what we are designing is sometimes required to stimulate our imagination.

Katharina Fritsch, (1956 born in Essen in Germany) "many of my sculptures first exist as an immaterial picture that suddenly emerge in my mind's eye. It is like a vision, a picture that just appears. I think in pictures. I once had an assistant who claimed that was not possible, but perhaps I am an exception, I really can think in pictures. it's important that my sculptures don't have that 'heavy metal' feeling. I am less concerned with sculpture than with the third dimension. Of course I have to abide by all the various laws of sculpture but actually I would like to forget these and just make three-dimensional pictures. That is to say, I go through a process that leads from the original picture to reality, which then turns back into a picture. I find this game between reality and vision very interesting. I think my work moves backwards and forwards between two poles. There is still the connection to the real, but at the same time to the unreal" (Katharina Fritsch, 2002 p,97).

I subscribe to the notion that art is the process of capturing a moment in life, by way of projection on to an artist's senses, and a subsequent filtering through his mind, and ultimately materialization through his hands and instruments. However, that is just the beginning. To take a life of its own, the work of art should further find its way into the minds of its viewers or listeners again through a series of projections and filtering. The excitement of the moment that impinges upon the senses of the artist can be very powerful at times, so powerful that the artist can be blinded by its sheer power, in which case the intervention of critique can play a vital role.

#### 5.4 Inventing from imagination

It is said that people start creating when they are no longer content with just knowing. In the process of creation there is a constant need for guidance, usually in the form of a critique by the artist himself or others. This procedure tends to help set the course that the artist's creation will take. The lack of such guidance, presents a risk of veering in random directions; fighting windmills and ghouls of imagination.

An artist's creation may not necessarily have its origins in his own experience; it may be a fabrication. Nevertheless, there is always a trace of the artist in each of his creations, even when it is not immediately clear, and it may find its own form in totally unexpected ways through the minds of its viewers.

A point in case concerning the role of fabrication as a legitimate source of inspiration for the artist, is the following commentary by Konstantinos Kavafis (Capan, 1985 p.xi translated by Capan). In his book he is saying that "I have never gone on a country outing but I had written a poem as if I went on a country outing; Would it not be unfair to discredit a work of art, simply because it had elements of fabrication?" Does not art through its aspect of creation, intrinsically have elements of fabrication in its very nature? Has not fabrication been conducive to the highest works of creativity? "And then he is saying one of the least sincere things that can be written is a perfect lie"(Capan, 1985 p.xi).



Socrates says, "Asking is easy". What is more, there are always questions that cut deeper than any sort of answer." Yet asking is also a responsibility, of using the act of questioning to stimulate the mind towards new insights. In the context of this discussion, where the purpose of creativity is very much involved in the artist's duty to express inner and personal truths, the heart of the matter is being able to come up with questions that are ones own. The possibilities that emerge when an artist attempts to explore and answer questions with the proviso that he or she maintains sincerity at all times are not only that the artist reveals conscious and thought-out answers to the world, but also brings to the surface, by accident, issues of which he or she might never otherwise be aware. The reward, thus, of being honest with facts as well as fabrications during the entire creative process is that the art works have the power to demonstrate a deeper and more provocative set of values. In the author's view, this is one of the major components of innuendo.

Honesty in art does not cease to exist or to matter at the limits of displaying the facts of the known world, such as in the case of a painter striving to capture in the most realistic way possible using oil paints, the effects of light, texture and perspective. If the painter is a shy person by nature, or a squanderer of money or a habitual drinker, then if he paints with honesty, these characteristics will inevitably seep into the finished artwork. In fact, one might indicate just how much criticism and evaluation of the fine arts is involved in determining the circumstances surrounding the artist while a particular work was being created, rather than the subject of the painting itself. Many commentators devote much of their quest into understanding art by wondering whether this painting, this

sculpture or that work of architecture reflects the fact that its creator was at the time very short of money, losing his religious faith, being isolated socially or committing adultery. To take a particularly outstanding example, almost all of the discourse into the works of Van Gogh pay barely any attention to the fields, flowers and objects painted, but on how these works express a narrative of advancing madness and deep despair.

The author might go further and ask: Can art under any circumstances, as a discipline founded on the pillars of creativity, individuality and expression, allow for fabrications that compromise the sincerity of the artist? In other words: Can a shy artist create a picture that demonstrates bravery and confidence without any discernible hint towards the true nature of artist? To this the author proposes that the artist cannot but reveal his inner nature, nor perhaps that of the subject he has been commissioned to present. The painting of a proud and courageous scene by a shy artist will inevitably convey the falsity of that pride and courage as told through the artist's eyes, just as a Van Gogh's painting of flowers in full bloom cannot but be seen to sag under the weight of isolation and melancholia.

In fact, no matter to what extent the work of art is founded on invalid conjectures, it is immaterial. The Truth that gives contradiction to these conjectures will always be expressed in the artwork. In the author's point of view, it is not even essential that the artist is conscientious about the meaning and implications of his art, for himself or his viewers. However much the artist might strive to convey a work that does not accord with his or her true nature, what has been created

will inevitably declaim most loudly, through innuendo, the very facts they seek to conceal.

### 5.5 Subliminal approach

'It is night, Bond is working as a security guard, he is in an office and the window is open. The moon is visible behind the clouds that are racing across the sky.' This quote indicates that the event takes place in the summer (window open) the weather is stormy (clouds racing) (Barthes 1993, p, 97).

The above excerpt from Barthes perfectly encapsulates what is meant in this discussion by the subliminal approach. It is the deliberate inclusion of premeditated details that could be said to be superfluous to the subject of the art work (thus, in the excerpt, it may be immaterial whether or not the scenario involving the security guard occurs in the summer or the wintertime) but nonetheless gives a more complete visualization of the context of the artwork. The subliminal approach is therefore different from serendipity, because it concerns a set of clues deliberately inserted by the artist rather than realized by the viewer who triangulates his or her experience of artwork with his or her own knowledge of the world, and is different from innuendo, in that it is not accidental and is a matter of choice on the behalf of the artist.

In the author's sculpture, He has always sought to apply the subliminal approach. Consider a piece of literary work in which there are no particular dates given about the occurrence of a particular event. A critical reader can infer the general



historical period in which the event takes place by observing the bits and clues that indirectly suggest it. Similarly, in one of my pieces where I used a table decorated with spoon, fork, and knife, a critical viewer can infer that the table probably belonged to a family of modest income, as the utensils all have different shapes and styles, suggesting they were bought through time in a piece-meal fashion. This suggestion is intended by the author and one might say that he expects the viewer to 'join the dots' and perceive the undercurrents that the artist has laid out so carefully just beneath the immediate surface of the work.

The difficulty experienced in concluding a piece of artwork is compounded when the artist feels a constant urge of betterment and transcendence.

### **5.6 Intellectual satisfaction- hiding instinct**

This section illustrates and explores the 'hiding instinct'. This is a recurring theme in the author's work and emerges directly from his acceptance of his own weakness and it occurs as a solution for the author's weakness. As described by Walter Benjamin and others, however, the hiding instinct also encapsulates the paradox that a person finds his or her true position of power by taking up a position of weakness.

The concept of "hiding instinct" can be the answer to the question "what makes up the basic construction of the author's sculptures". It is possible to lay out the introduction and development stages in two groups elaborating the improvement of the resources of the hiding instinct through the creation process which is a



"The art represents a sort of "reality" from the aspect of concentrating upon the amazing nature of griefs, agonies, weaknesses and mistakes that the individuals suffer from" (Pearson- 1994,p.86). In others words, even if one dwells in the landscape of his or her private fantasies and emotions, far from avoiding reality they are taking inspiration from a different viewpoint of reality which, although it differs from that of the prosaic world, is intimately bound up in it. The author thus becomes aware of the fact that he would tend to escape from the tragedy of the life by reflecting through the medium of art instead of escaping it by adopting an ascetic life style. In other words, the confrontation with reality paradoxically offers a refuge from it and, like everything, the work of art is a piece of life. As James Hall, in his essay "Self Portraiture" quotes from Oscar Wilde; "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist. Not of the sitter. Was it possible to say that every sculptor sculpts himself? He responds his question 'it certainly was'" (The picture of Dorian Gray, cited in Hall, J, World as Sculpture, 1890).

As an individual who makes art, the realizations of the author's expectations starts to find out their correlation through his works. He creates his works of art as he lives – as a largely unplanned process of discovery and adaptation. Straight is not exactly straight; no plan will ever accord perfectly to the unknowns of the future.

If the author therefore wants to make a perfect, three-dimensional cube, some of its surfaces will inevitably becomes swollen, its edges slightly out of true or its corners crooked. One might say (and the author thinks this is true) that the organic imperfections that are produced in the making of 'pure' three-dimensional

shapes are the objective correlative of the author's inherent refusal, conscious or unconscious, of the desire to achieve geometric perfection, and to celebrate the honesty of flaws. In this case, the underlying desire should not be understood as meaning that the author has chosen a worse and grubbier lifestyle. On the contrary, it stems from the truth that their ambition to win and to be flawless can be considered as the first factor that harms the ethics in the struggle to a better living. A new or a perfect thing has no tendency to hide or to be hidden. The tendency to hide away or stay in a corner is much more common for old, worn-out and imperfect things.

The hiding instinct thus reflects a moving away from pre-planned future expectations as well as seeking to refuse them. All of the author's sculpture designs constructed in the past and present do not say anything about the future. "The form the gods take depends upon the character of the particular people and its will to power" (KGM VI 1:70-72).

As the above quotation indicates, while all peoples have different substantive goals, they are fundamentally distinguished by the strength or weakness of their inherent, communal will. A strong people considers itself free and looks forward to the future, finding in its past a justification for its conquest and mastery of others. A weak people sees itself constrained by the past and seeks in its gods a redemption from the 'it was'. A strong people are filled with a thankfulness for its success and believes it can count on its gods in the future. Such a people enjoy life and praise existence, even when it is hideous or terrible. A weak people, by contrast, is dominated by the spirit of revenge, or what Nietzsche latter called

resentment; "they hate life because it suffers from it and no goal that can justify its suffering; a weak people thus rejects the actual world in favour of a transcendent beyond or afterlife" (Gillespie 1995 p 220). There is almost no difference between being surrounded by the walls or being inside of a well.

In the author's viewpoint, Tony Smith's sculpture "Die" which is in the form of a metal cube painted in a black color is one of the most beautiful examples of what such shapes really refer to. "*The darkness first falls on the wells*", said by Bilge Karasu in his novel 'the Night', can be used as a metaphor in the creation process of the author's works in which I tried to point out the concept 'hiding instinct'.

"The Dionysian or tragic man can affirm the active nihilist but the active nihilist cannot affirm the Dionysian stance toward life. Indeed, he cannot even affirm himself. His action is always reaction, and his reaction is always rejection and negation. While the active nihilist clears the ground in an act of convulsive self-destruction, he creates no future. The Dionysian man may be a destroyer but he is an innocent destroyer, untouched by the spirit of revenge." (Gillespie 1995, p.181).

The above mentioned examples may reflect the nature of the 'hiding instinct', as something that encapsulates but also transcends the connotation of 'helplessness'. In certain ways helplessness is the opposite of the hiding instinct, in that it evokes exposure and visibility rather than self-concealment. Nonetheless there is a fine balance between these two and indeed the author's hiding instinct



definition that results from the insufficient amount of materials the author have used in his sculptures (coal and bone) that are hidden, as is the nature of their existence. One of these stages is the concept of tragic alienation and nihilism that has been discussed in the previous sections concerning the facts representing the group of facts we face, feel and experience or are to experience during the lifetime. The second group consists of the psychological structures that have resulted from the so-called sociological facts as referred to elsewhere in this thesis as the abstract emotions. These include such forces as instinctive, conscience or unconscious emotions that influence the creation process of the sculpture.

The senses of alienation and nihilism or the tragic concepts in our life may have different impressions on different people. "Schopenhauer sees only two possible solutions, we can mirror the world and the will as artists or we can become ascetics. Both paths, however, are possible only for the genius who is chosen by an incomprehensible act of the will. The rest of humanity is doomed to practice in the cycle of crime and suffering. (Gillespie, 1995, page \*\*). In other words, Schopenhauer sees that, while most (presumably) of the human race is condemned to barbarism, among them live enlightened beings who have the power to opt either for life that confronts, understands and explains the world, such as through the creation of honest artworks, or can escape from its reality.

Choosing one of the alternatives offered by Schopenhauer does not mean to refusing the other. Indeed, as the following speech by Nietzsche on art indicates a sort of 'reality' from the aspect of concentrating upon the amazing nature of griefs, agonies, and weakness and mistakes that the individuals suffer from.



can be said to have roots in his sense of helplessness. Even some of the nihilists who declared the collapse and destruction of the ethics preferred to say 'Yes' to the life in spite of the entire tragedy of the life, in spite of life's tragedy and their keen awareness of this. They are driven less by the intention to break up a social environment in which all would live happily than to make up one in which all would live individually.

The author tries to create sculptures with materials such as furniture, which might be considered as a reflection of our social status belonging to the past, present and the future as well as materials such as coal, or bone, which remain hidden and how they move towards and complete their formation is a mystery concealed by their hiding places. The author's intellectual satisfaction in creating artworks takes its final form from the feeling that the hiding instinct becomes superior to, and conquers, helplessness at every moment of and during the process of design. Although the creation process is as has been summarized above, many of the sculptures force the author to make a selection between the two opposing concepts of hiding and helplessness.

In the 'Rapid Functional Complex Impact' section of his book 'Reading Struggle', Aksit Gokturk studies the text-strategy of the 'Nestor' part of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, one of the three authors studied by Gokturk, and follows one of the characters of the book Stephan Dedalus and his thoughts on 'probability'. Here, the author exemplifies some parts in which Stephen Dedalus asked and answered questions to his own. "Did Pyrrhus and Caesar think that they would be murdered in a day in the way we know presently? Yes, the life is one of the

thousands of opportunities. These opportunities can be deleted and remain meaningless because they were not practiced. But are they compulsory to stay the same every time? Isn't it the restriction of an idea? Stephen thinks that the fact takes the appearance of an incomplete context of a meaningful integrity by consuming only one of the endless opportunities". (Gokturk, 1988, p.116-118-119).

Life is a quotation in which the opportunities are questioned. It is a process of realizing the realities created or selected by us like many other individuals. Of course, this process may not always come to an end with a certain response. In the process of selecting the existing opportunities in life, there is not a certain difference between our selectiveness, which has resulted from our psychological aptness, and the opportunities that we experience during the creation process of a work of art. Making a selection among the opportunities looks like the selection of an artist who has limited material opportunities. Increasing of the opportunities may result in difficulty in our selection; however, it may facilitate our selection as well.

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#### \*Hiding Instinct

Turkish poet, author and critic Enis Batur(1992) starts writing his essay on the poetry of Ece Ayhan, who is also a Turkish poet, with reference to a quotation by Jacques Lacan, "A hidden text may find all of its dimensions insofar as it focuses on the missing languages". Ece Ayhan starts the introduction to the essay asking the very question, "whether this would be considered as a clue for the reader who

gets into relation with the codex that takes him to the center of the labyrinth and let him go out without losing his way".

Ece Ayhan tries to make up the link with the 'dead history' through the examples in his poems which is the most important aspect of the historical layers with the historicity that inspires his poetry.

In fact, the metaphors that are the basic points of the special style of Ece Ayhan's poetry are illustrated through the analysis of the forms of usage of the language, especially, the cant language. "Does the hidden text that is formed depend on the lost languages? The critic states that his entire poetry does not depend on the lost languages, however, the fact is that he also uses the cant language frequently." Although it is determined by the critic that the poet uses the cant language due to the 'hiding' stimulus in his poetry, the poet tries to exemplify that this determination did not only result from the usage of cant language but the metaphors and imagery moved around the 'hiding' stimulus as well.

The critic also focuses on the fictional birds in the poetry of Ece Ayhan. He states that the poet does not attempt into the fiction within his own possibilities like Borges, and the bird images used by the poet are mostly his own imaginary birds. He makes the general definition of the bird symbol. He, shortly, refers to the Islamic view which depicts the soul as a bird, and the fear and hope as two wings of the mankind. Simurg is a bird that can speak with the human language. It leaves a few feathers wherever it stays for the night. Whenever Simurg is

required, its feathers are burnt. Then it sees the message, and flies to the place of the message, no matter how far it is, in order to utilize its healing power. According to Attar (from *Mantik ut-tayr*, the work of Ferid Al-Din Attar), Simurg is the representative of the hidden 'I', and the symbol of the search of the individual for his/her identity (Batur, 1992 p, 70).

His passion for using the lost language called 'cant' language, and the links created by the 'hiding' and 'secret' in the symbols used in his poetry led Ece Ayhan to be called as a 'dark' poet by another critic as well as criticisms regarding that his poetry was the reflection of the negative realities.

The concepts mentioned above such as 'hiding', 'secret', 'pessimism' and the similes (coal, diamond, etc.) used by his in some interviews contributed in the verbal description and explanation of his intellectual process.

For instance, when he was asked a question in an interview about his poems which were referred as 'the form produced by the essence'; he replied that most of the poets would answer this question as "yes, it is the form produced by the essence", and he pointed out that "this is, actually, the problem of coal and diamond". He also uses the 'coal and diamond' example while replying the question whether the poem takes its last shape or not; he says, "please allow us time to see how the coal converts into a diamond"(Ayhan, 1984 p,68).

Perhaps, one of the clues proving that his poetry was formed in the orbit of 'hiding' stimulus would be one of his quotations from Althusser in an interview;



“ambiguity is the main quality of the human” (Ayhan, 1984, p,47)

Finally, in one of the interviews, when he was asked ‘the real sources of poetry’, he replied, “I can tell some of them: the remains, whoever driven outside, the outcasts, the ones with ill fate, and the ones prohibited” (Ayhan, 1984, p,92).

### **5.7 Could the hiding instinct be related to meditation?**

The author likens (and terms) the process involved throughout sculpting as ‘meditation’, meaning meditation upon the moment that is related to every point of this progress. In eastern philosophy, meditation is indicated as a way of escaping from the physical desires that result from (and in) the suffering of individuals. Individuals construct their lives, even most probably on their future plans, in every field of life. It would be possible to isolate the desire as a primary factor that binds their lives, however, it must be accepted that it is impossible to escape from the future or, indeed, from the end of life.

### **5.8 Tools and materials**

At the culmination of period of spontaneous making the author discovered how different materials used to perform a similar fixing function in the sculptures affected the overall and the resolution of the completed image.

In one work, by utilising coal to fill in the negative space of chair, the author chose to deploy a familiar fixing process to consolidate the material. The sculpture that evolved from this making process was a wooden pyramid (Figure 26) of approximately 1.80cm height and 1.60cm in width. By applying small pieces of coal to wooden pyramid sub-structure and affixing with paste-like black adhesive the author discovered that the scale of this work obviated the need to fill any gaps that occurred between the coal fragments.

With reference to chair (Figure 27), a work smaller in scale, the spaces between the affixed elements were visually problematic, as here a hollow appearance evolved where the aim was to create an appearance of solid form. Consequently an alternative material had to be sourced to visually and practically compact the form, and a material that enabled painting to replica the blackness that existed in the previously used Black Magic material. Also required was a material that did not need to be applied by spatula given the smallness of the coal fragments and the need to compact spaces on the smaller work.

The discovery of liquid nails adhesive provided an opportunity for the author to create works on a substantial scale that required no internal sub structure, and later in the development of the sculptures, introduction of glue gun sticks provided both an affordable and cheaper alternative as well as a material and colour that was compatible with the use of bone and china fragments (Figure 28).

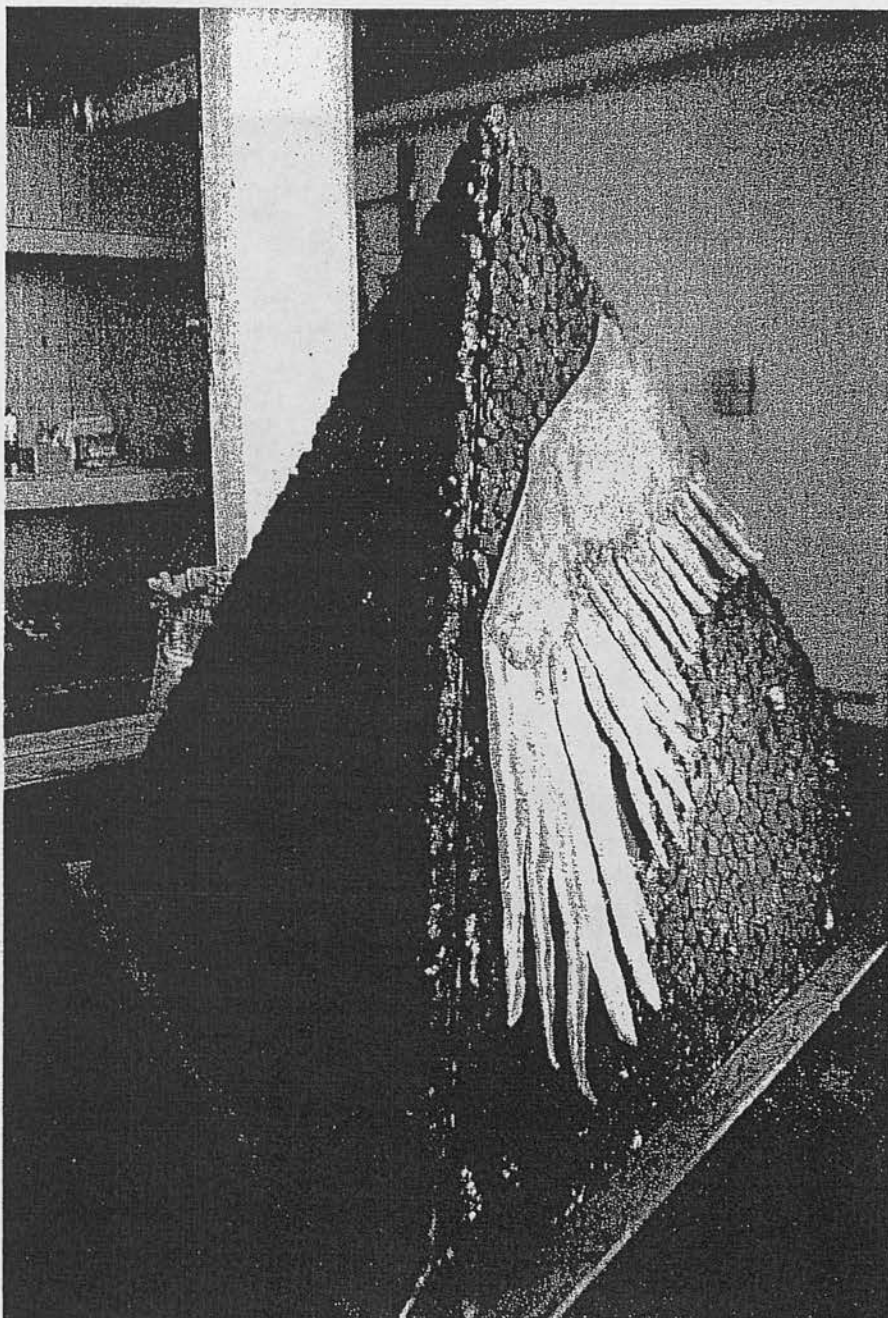


Figure 26. Untitled  
Coal and Metal (1997)  
Orhan Tekin



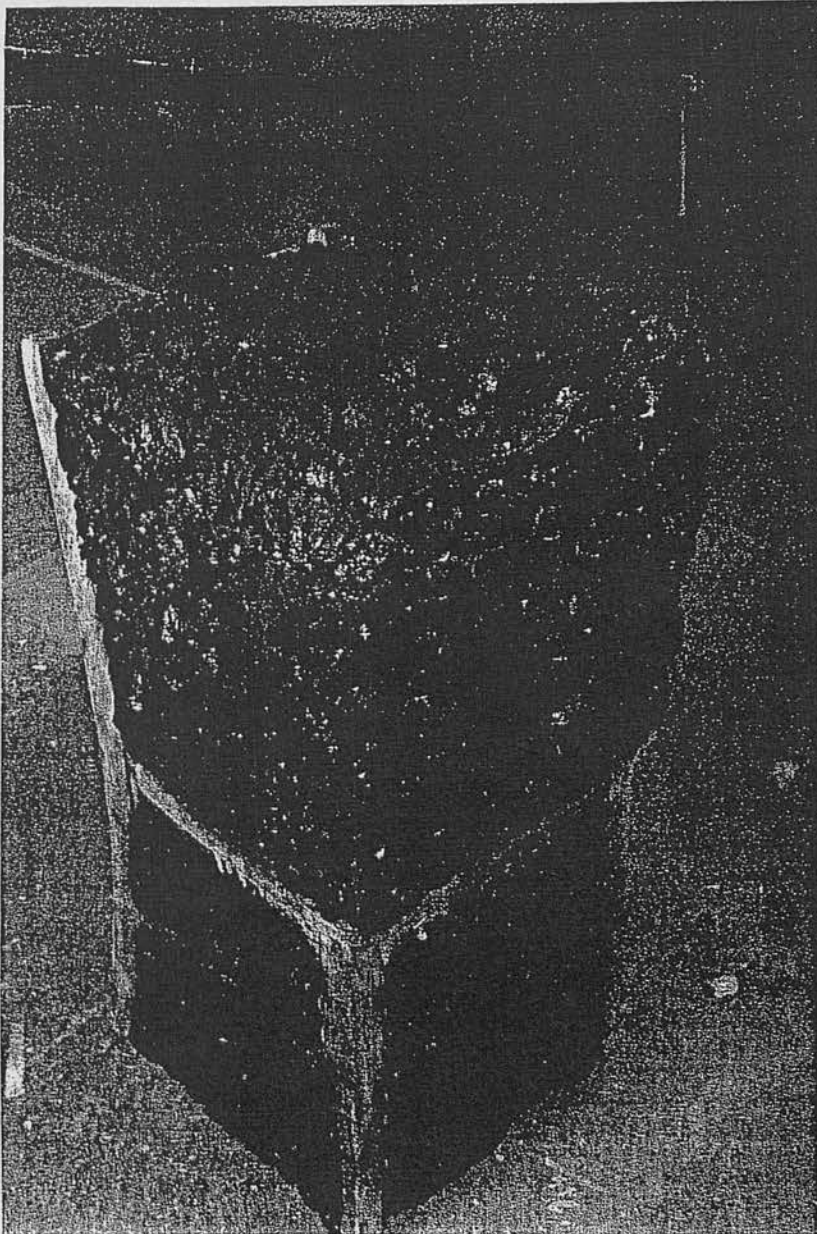


Figure 27. Chair-Coal, wood (1998 ) Orhan Tekin

Figure 25. Table-Plaster, Larch Wood  
(2002) Orhan Tekin



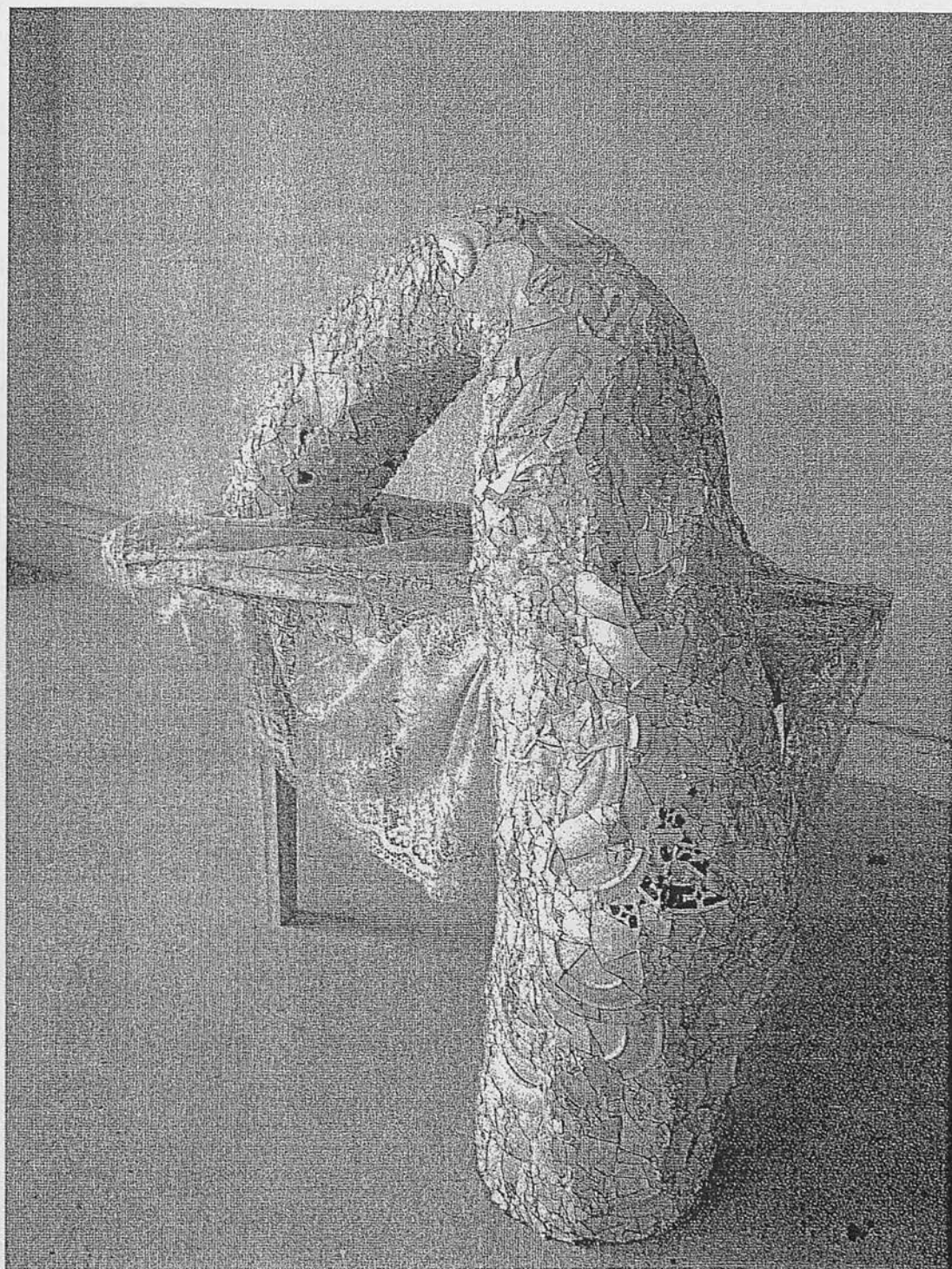


Figure 28. Table- Plates, Lace, Wood  
(2002) Orhan Tekin,

The author has created several sculptures using coal in various combinations along with furniture other materials and artefacts applicable to domesticity e.g. dishes, spoons, and forks. Although already familiar with using furniture and coal together, in Bed (Figure 29) the Bed concept was intended to associate with the sensation or image of 'death', and here, the colour of liquid nails, bone and furniture became more appropriate to the idea.

As experienced and evidenced in the Bed sculpture, the organic form that evolved from the inflexible working properties of the adhesive was effectively utilised as part of the natural spontaneous progression of the work and helped to provide a positively monumental appearance to the sculpture.

The flatness of coal found in Scotland along with the use of glue gun sticks (as opposed to the rounded form utilised in the USA with liquid nails) provided the author with a direction that enabled the creation of Table (Figure 30) where the outcome was to create a fossil-like impression under a tablecloth on the table surface. A further development of this working process was to visually create a mosaic-like surface, with it there occurred a potential difficulty that had to be resolved, as mosaic influence or an overall decorative effect was not the author's intention.

In retrospect, nihilistic material and process connected to nihilistic concept has been instrumental in developing the entire creative process for the author.



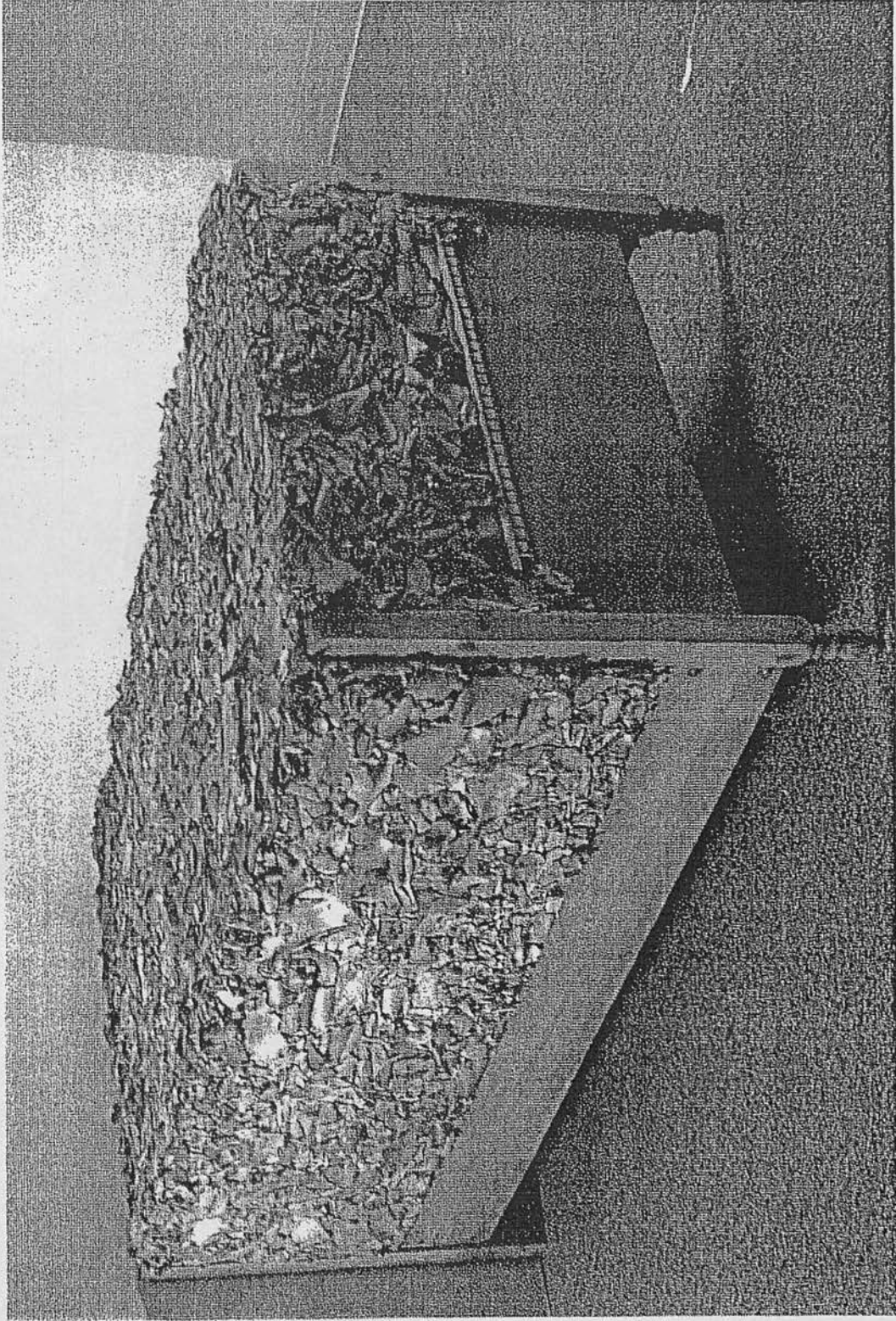
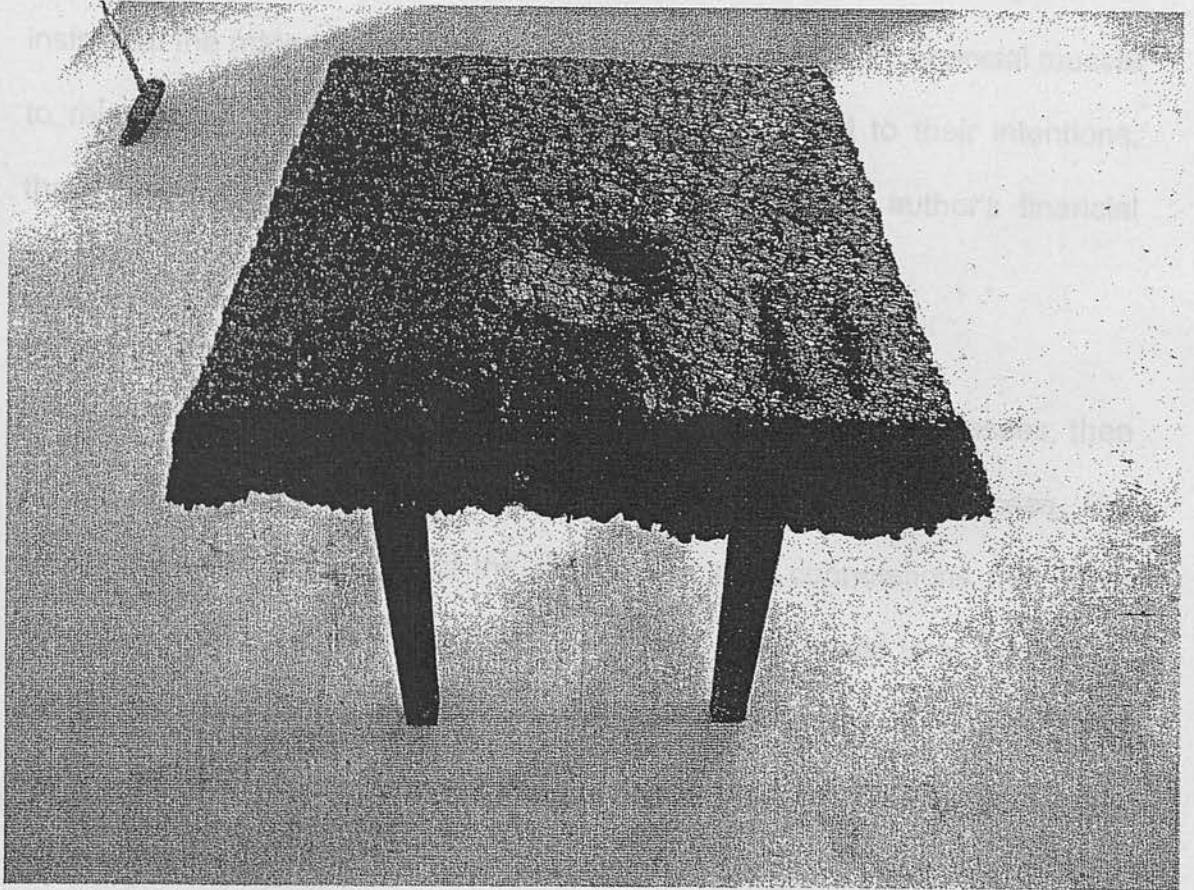


Figure 29. Bed- Bone, wood  
(1999) Orhan Tekin



**Figure 30. Table- Coal, wood  
(2002) Orhan Tekin**



While making the presentation of his intellectual fictions and hesitations through the medium of sculpture, the author found that the peculiar practical conditions, such as recognition and selection of the material, and the deployment of various techniques and knowledges, all became central and significant to the creation process. Moreover, while one might imagine a Canova, a Jeff Koons or any other highly successful sculptor being able to insist that the materials behaved as expected, and having the financial muscle to reject imperfect materials and use ones more suited to their intentions, these small difficulties, which were inseparable from the author's financial weakness, became driving factors in the creative process.

If you face no problem during material selection and working processes, then the design works might continue fluently during the creation process, like dominoes toppling. In light of the richness of new connotations that have seeped into his work as a consequence of what many would term weakness, the author has learned to delight in the lessons that can be forced to the surface by using compromise and by doing what one can with seemingly inadequate resources.

This process and experienced together with the choices that went behind selecting the tools and materials, taught the author that he was not obliged to achieve any particular thing at anytime or that what he wished to achieve was neither actually possible, required nor even desirable to happen all the time. Quite the contrary, the oppositions thrown up by the fact that he inhabited a imperfect world and that materials could disobey his own intentions was, in

the long run, for his own intellectual and philosophical benefit. It taught him not to intervene with the oppositions and to learn to live together with them and listen for their hidden values and instructions. No matter how the above-mentioned frustrations resulted in delaying and apparently damaging the creation process for a definite time, they assisted the author in finding a different direction, a different technique or meaning, as well. Thus, the Wall sculpture (relief) (Figure 31) made by using broken chair pieces, bone and cement, was the beginning process of finding out a different direction by bearing in mind the many frustrations experienced so far.

The realization of variations and different ways of presentation in any concept may not always emerge as a result of an arranged and rigorously pursued strategy. As Walter Benjamin says: "when the directness between the language and object disappears, then the language becomes the slave of the 'empty world'" (in Gurbilek 1993, p.14).

Throughout the physical presentation process of sculpture, the correlation between the tools and materials, such as knowing and ruling them or just the opposite, that is to say, not knowing and not ruling them, then become the roots for a distinctly different intellectual and creative process in sculpture.

Perhaps, what is important is to analyze or realize whether or not the so-called 'empty world' would help us during the presentation process of the concept.

Figure 31. Chair- Wood, Bone, earth, Concrete  
(2002) Orhan Tekin





## 6. Conclusion

The practice-based PhD in sculpture requires the production of a work of sculpture and also a short thesis that reflects on and develops the core ideas behind the work of sculpture. Although concerned with a description and analysis of these ideas as theory in their own right, the thesis contains a retrospective view of how these ideas were realised in the sculpture.

The thesis illustrates the theory of Nihilism and this is a recurring theme in the author's work and emerges directly from his life experience, that has gathered from literature, poetry and art that reflect the nihilism as well as the theoretical approach to material. Nihilism is the affirmation of human imperfections, will to power is the tendency to preserve and enhance ones personality. 'Will to power' is the determination to make use of freedom.

The statement is proposed, that will to power cannot be manipulated in favour of the rich. It is asserted that those who live in poverty and must create their own possessions are supermen for, when they use their will to power for solving the most trivial everyday problems. This act changing the values of the world is the obligation of the artist and the origin of art.

The practice-based PhD in sculpture contains a retrospective view of lived experience of actually producing the sculpture. Three principle components of this were Spontaneous creativity, Serendipity and Innuendo. These three



elements of the thesis focused on describing how these three components played a role in the production of the sculpture.

In regard to relationship with sculptural materials and tools during the PhD work, the author observed similar experience; people who live in poverty create their own possession and solve the most trivial everyday problems. This is similar to the process of making sculptures together with the choices that went behind selecting tools and materials taking into consideration richness of new nuance that have seeped into the author's work as a consequence of what many would term weakness. The author has learned to delight in the lessons that can be forced to the surface by using compromise and by doing what one can apparently inadequate resources.

Comfort and conformity with existing values denies openness to these hiding worlds; discomfort and the inability to conform force them to be discovered.

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Orhan Tekin

PhD Practice Component in Sculpture in Edinburgh  
College of Art

Figure 32. PhD Practice Component in Edinburgh College of Art  
(2003) Orhan Tekin

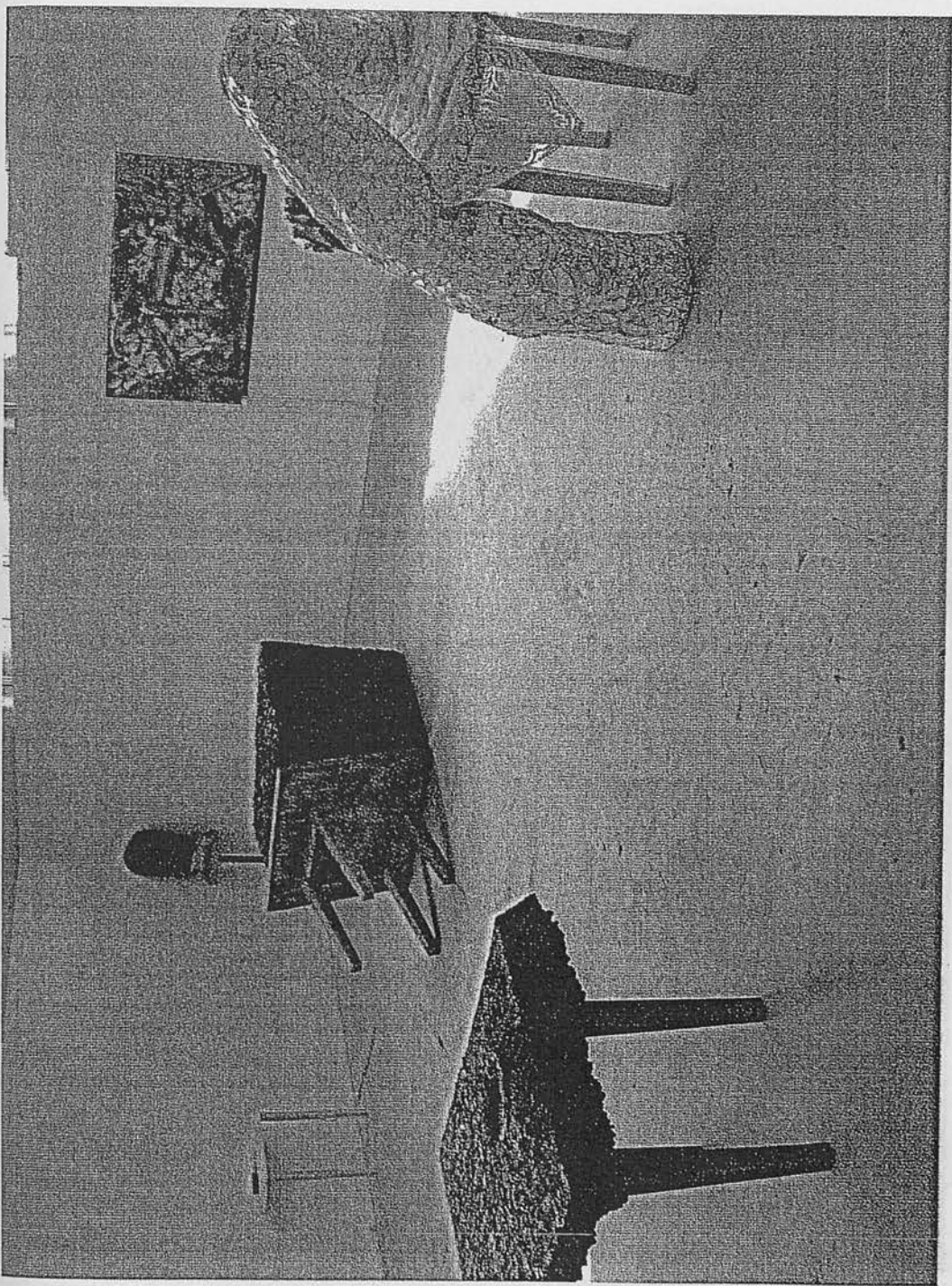


Figure 32. PhD Practice Component In Edinburgh College of Art  
(2005) Orhan Tekin

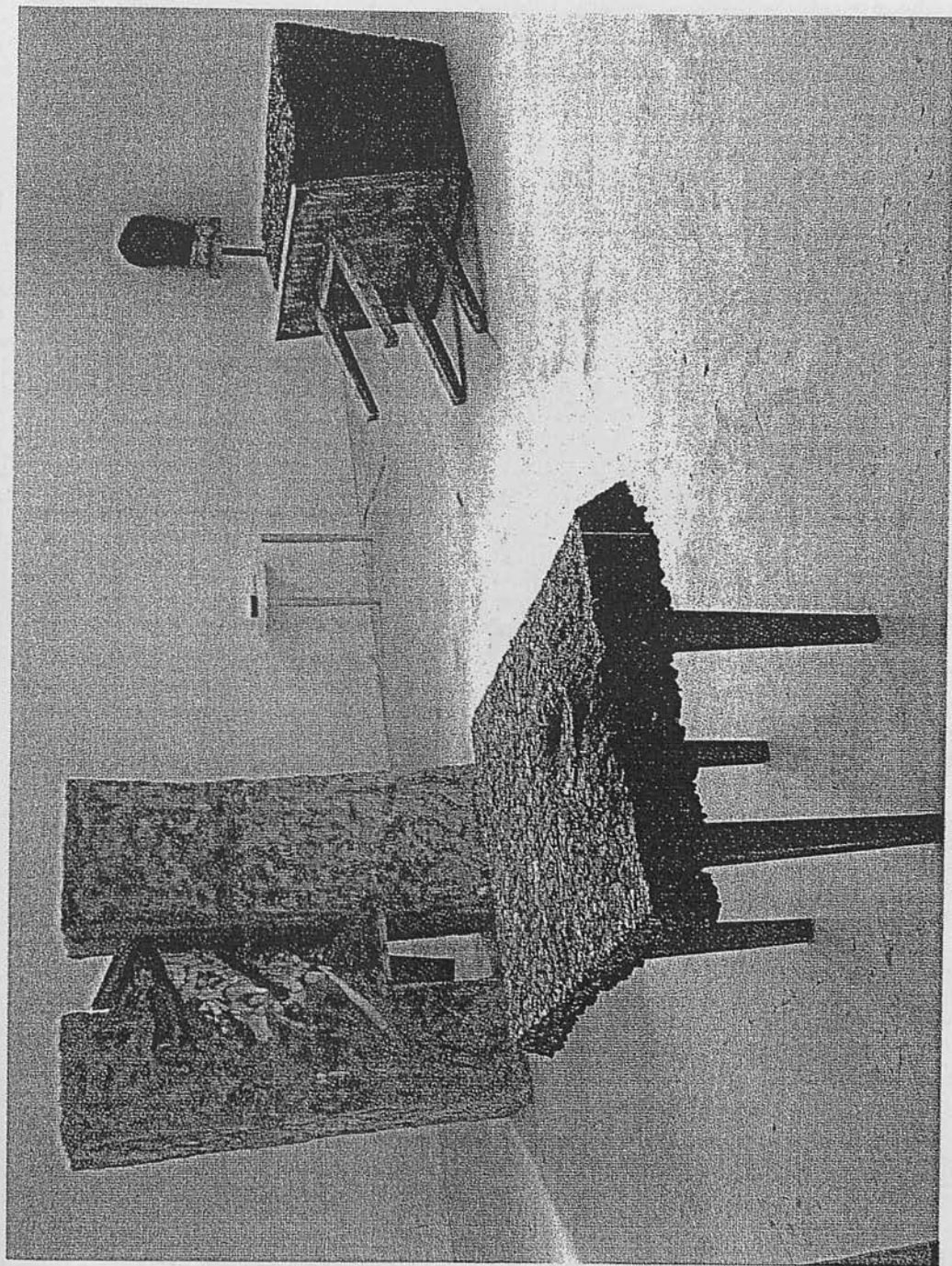


Figure 32. PhD Practice Component In Ediburgh College of Art (2005) Orhan Tekin



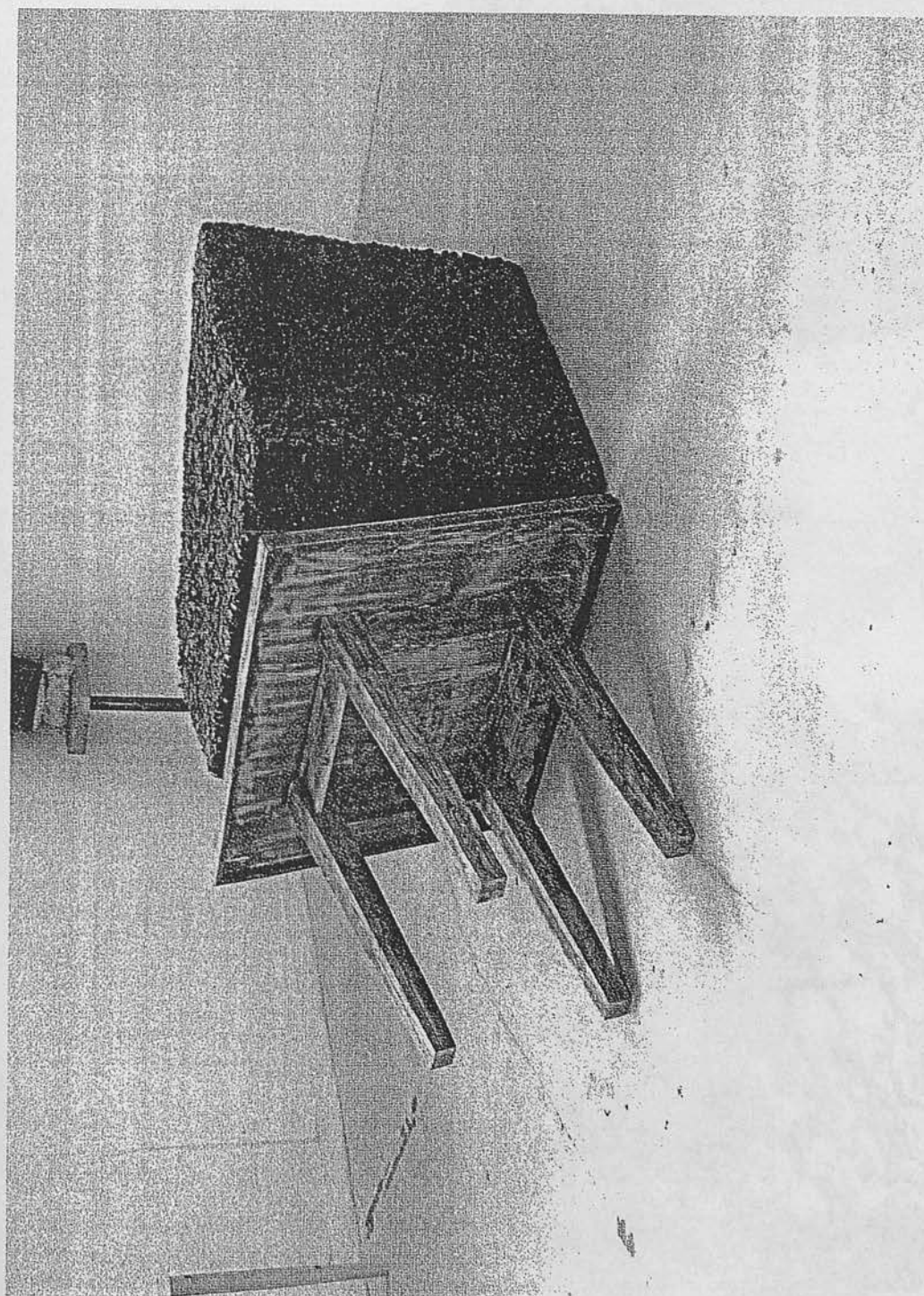


Figure 34 Untitled, Wood, Coal, Plate, Spoon Knife, Fork (2005) Orhan Tekin



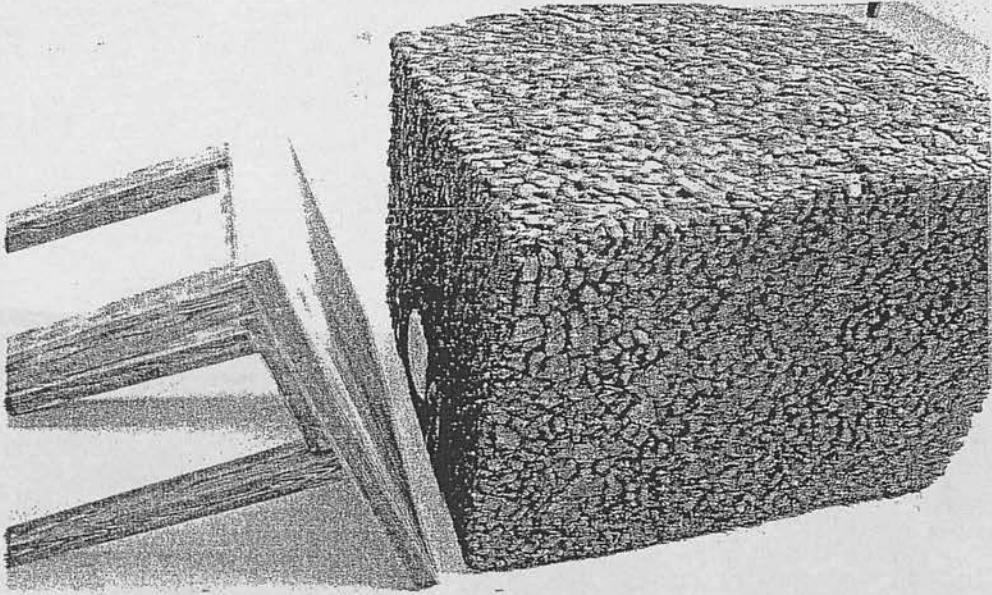


Figure 35. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin

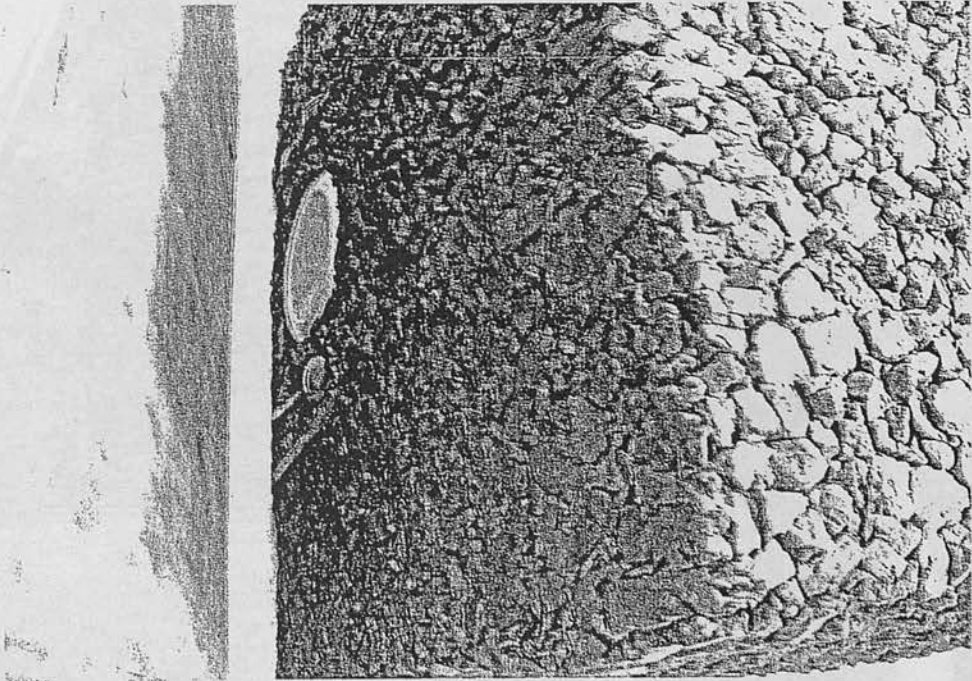


Figure 36. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin

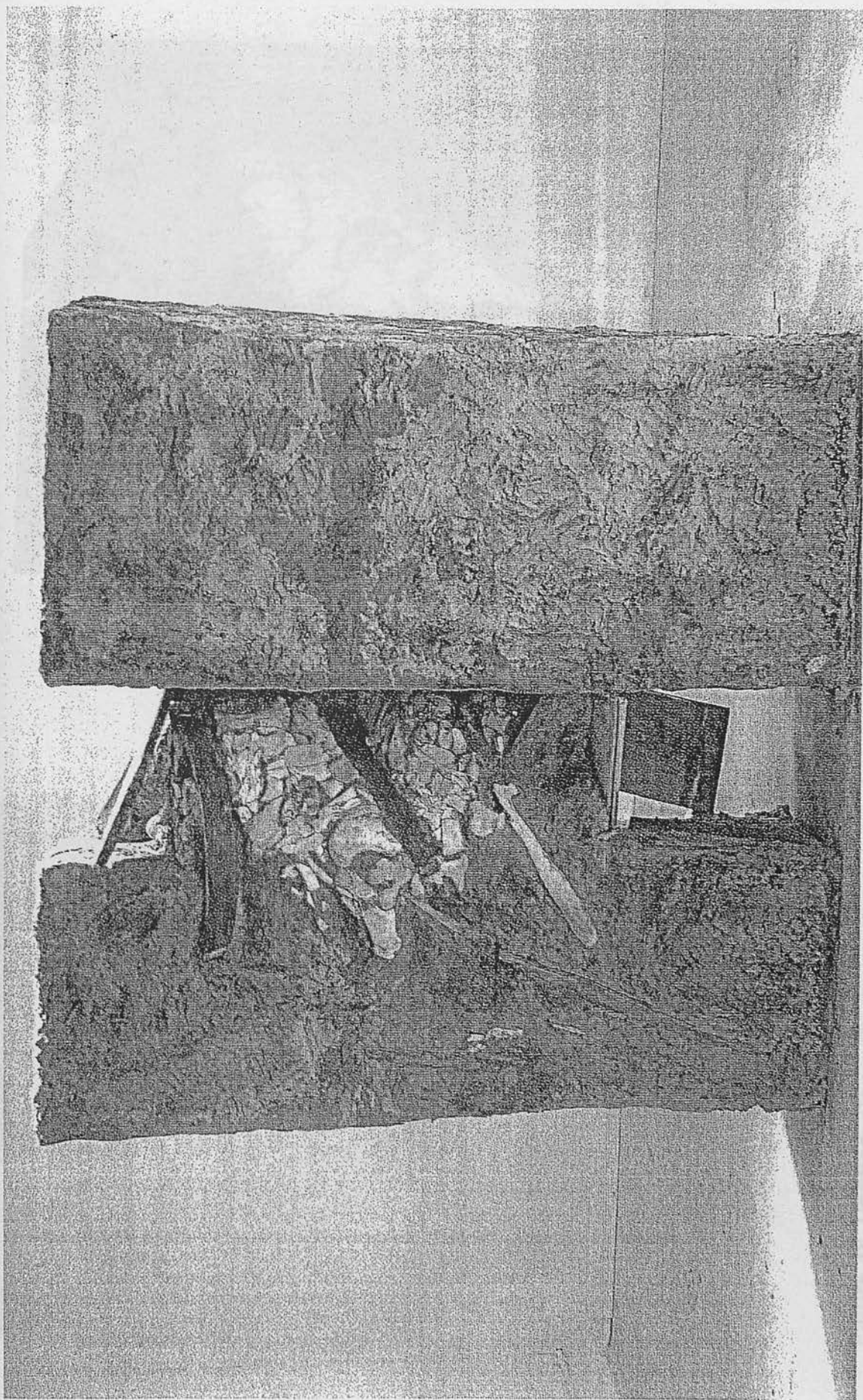


Figure 37. Untitled- Concrete, Earth, Bone, Wood (2005)  
Orhan Tekin





Figure 38. Untitled- Concrete, Earth, Bone,  
Wood (2005) Orhan Tekin

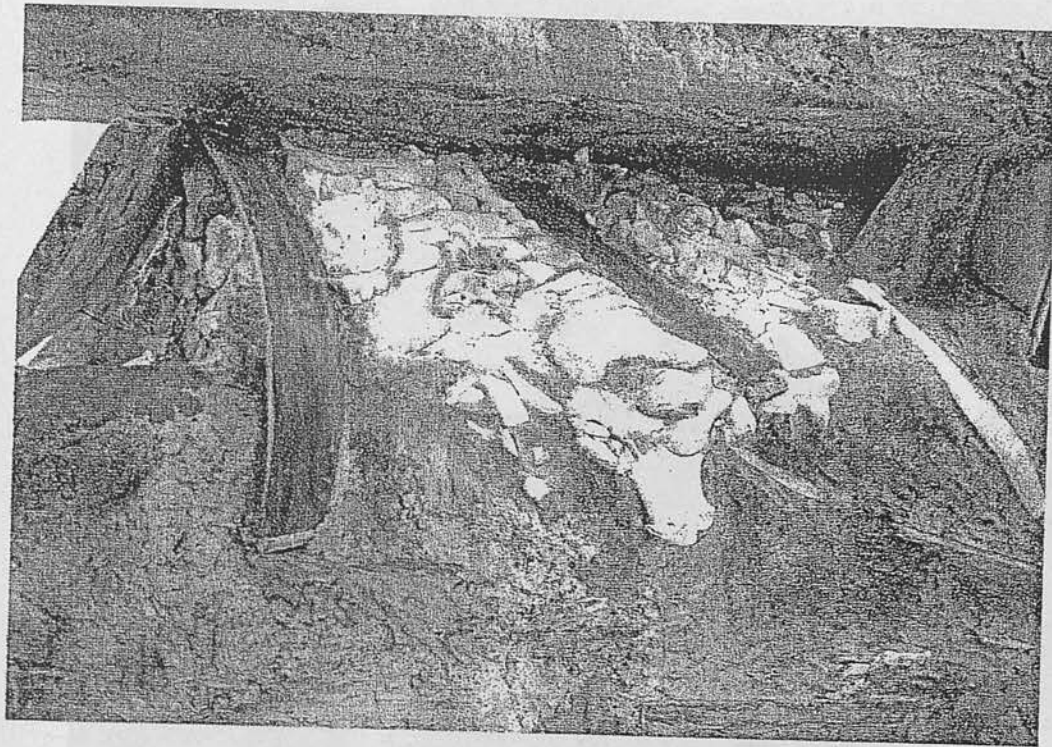


Figure 39. Untitled- Concrete, Earth, Bone,  
Wood (2005) Orhan Tekin

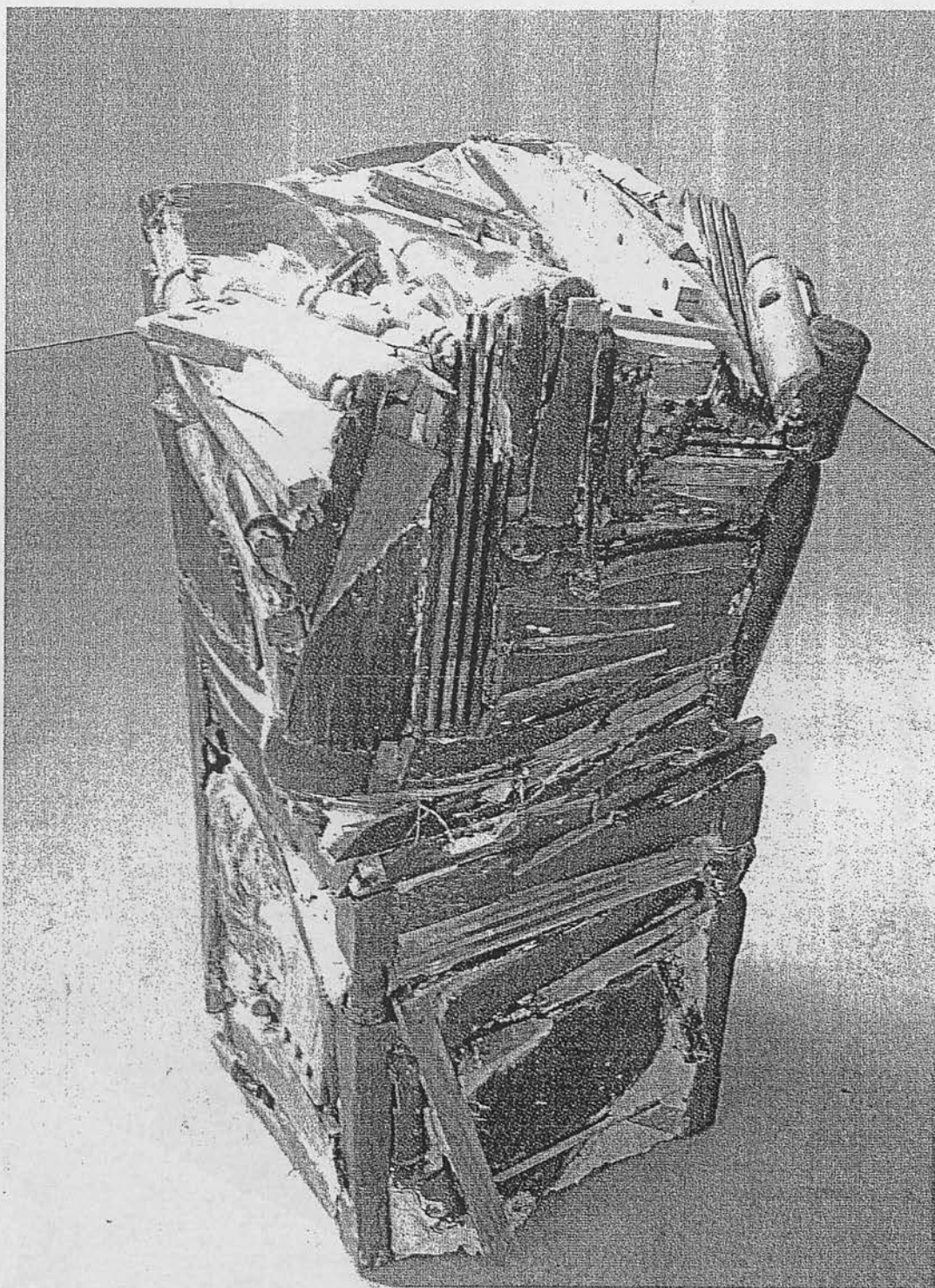


Figure 40. Chair-Life Size Chair- Wood (2005) Orhan Tekin



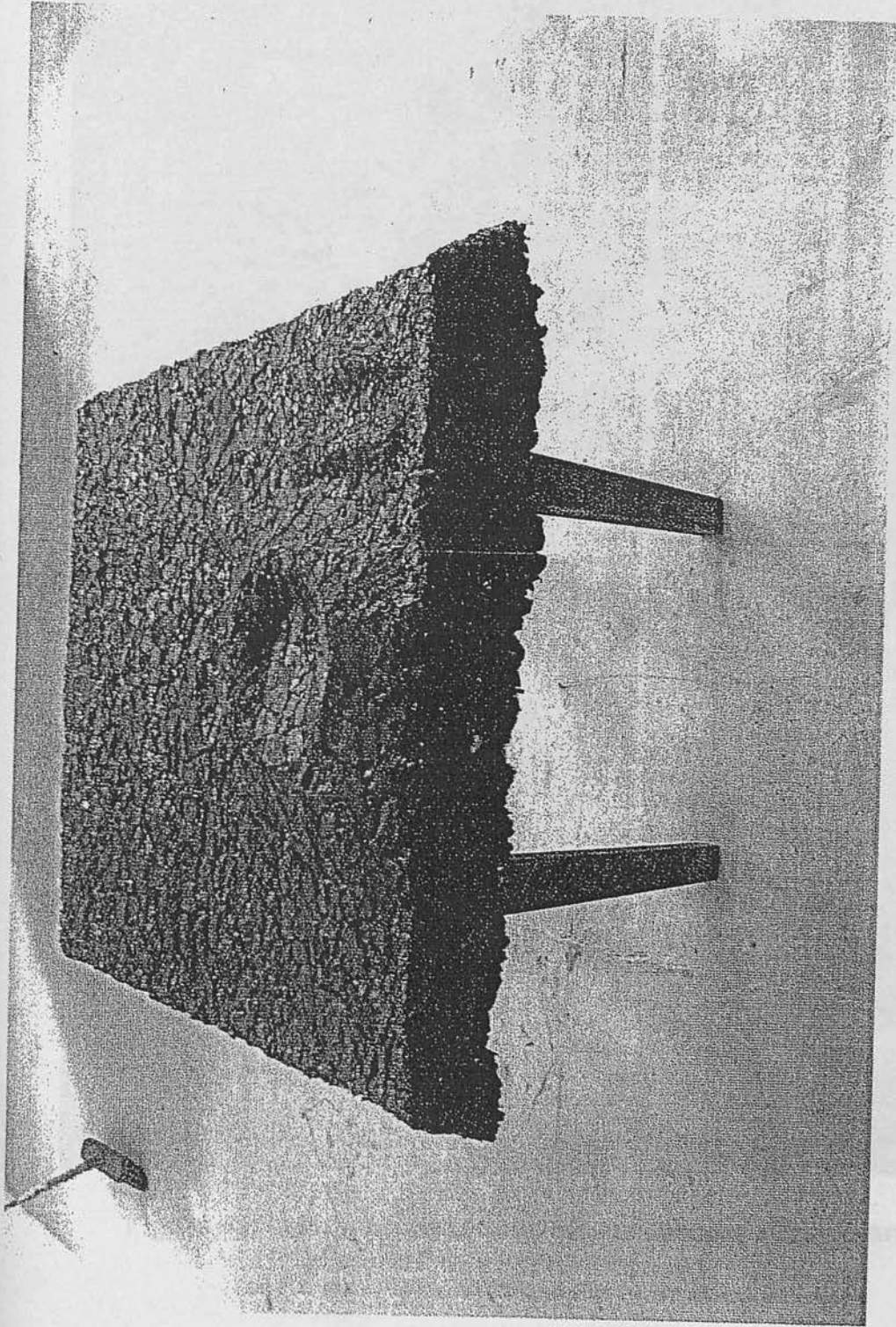


Figure 41. Table- Coal, Wood (2005) Orhan Tekin



Figure 42. Untitled- Coal, Plate, Wood, Latex (2005) Orhan Tekin

Figure 44.  
(2005) Orhan Tekin

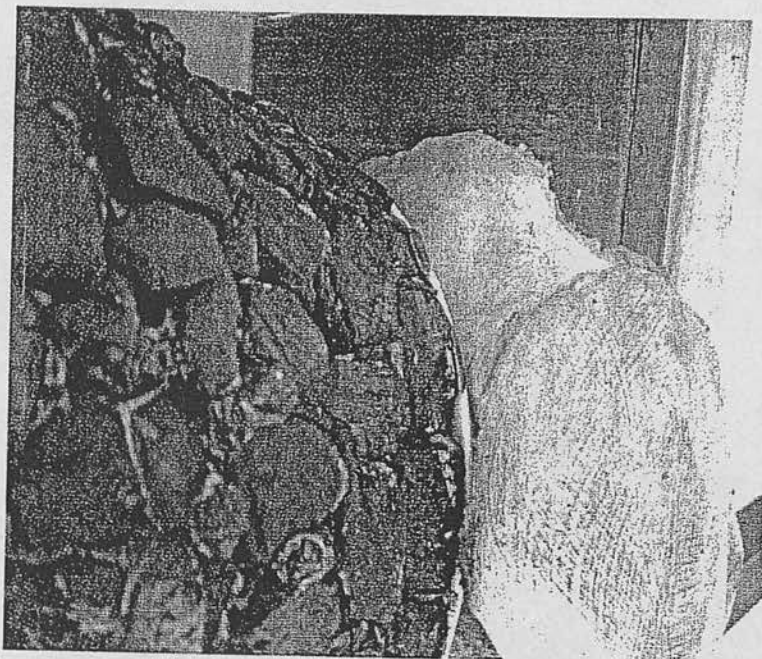


Figure 43.  
(2005) Orhan Tekin

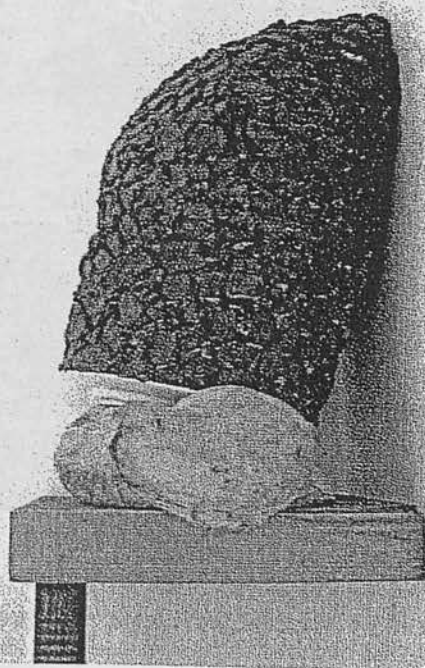


Figure 44.  
(2005) Orhan Tekin





Figure 45. Table- Plates, Wood, Lace (2005) Orhan Tekin

Figure 47. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin



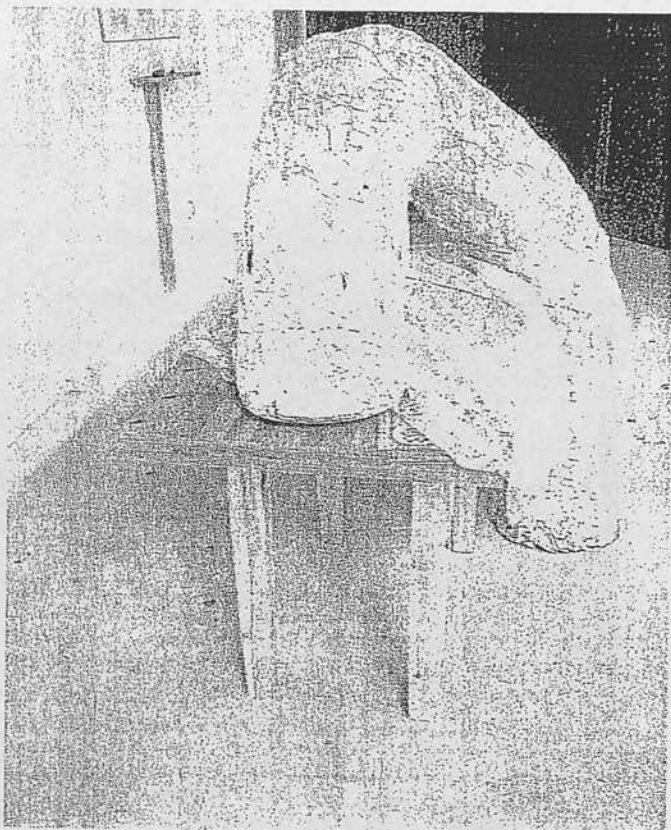


Figure 46. (2005) Orhan Tekin



Figure 47. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin



Figure 48. Chair- Wood, Bone, earth, Concrete (2005) Orhan Tekin



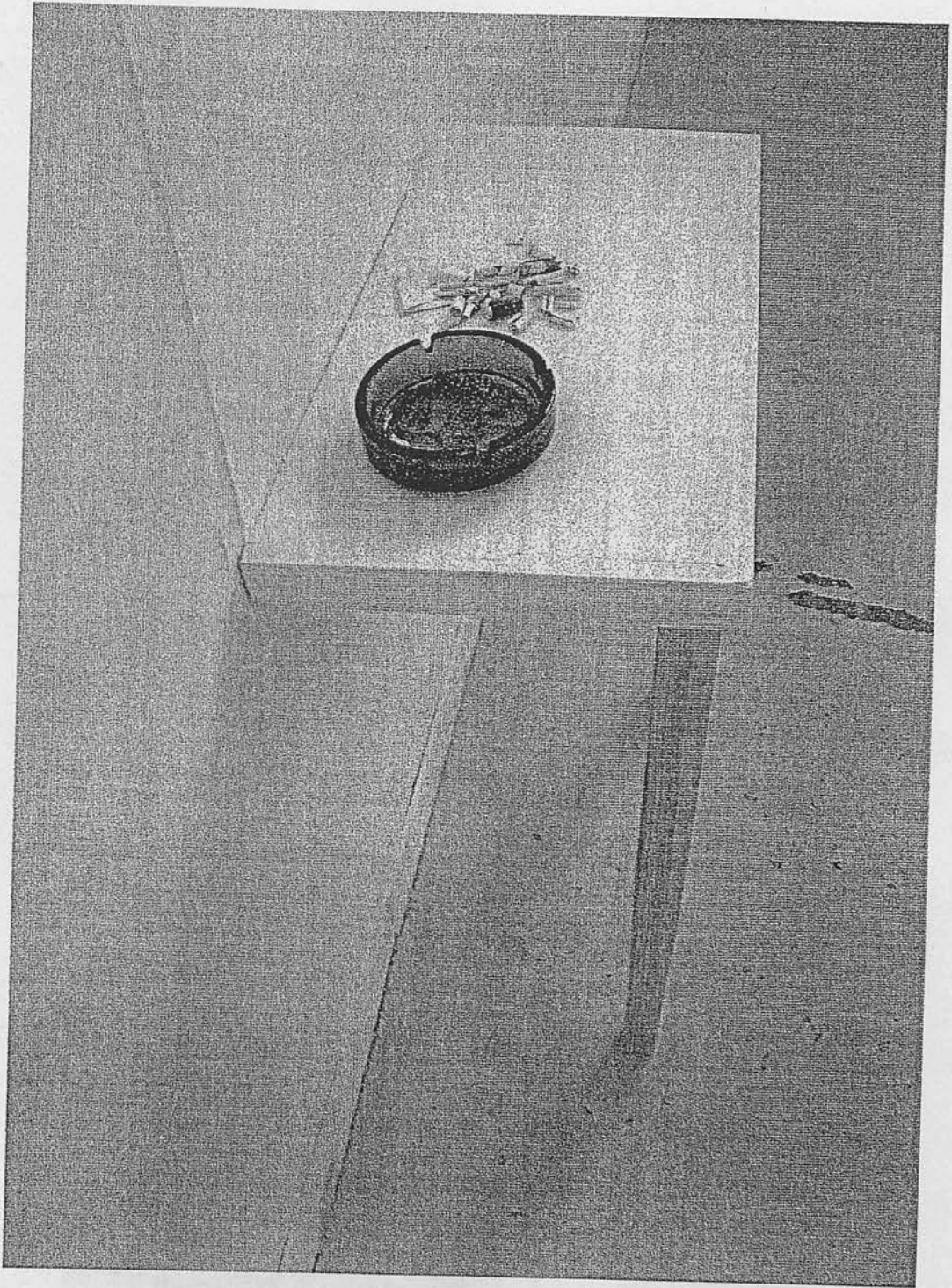


Figure 49. Untitled- Ashtray, Wood, Paper (2005) Orhan Tekin

Figure 50. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin





Figure 50. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin

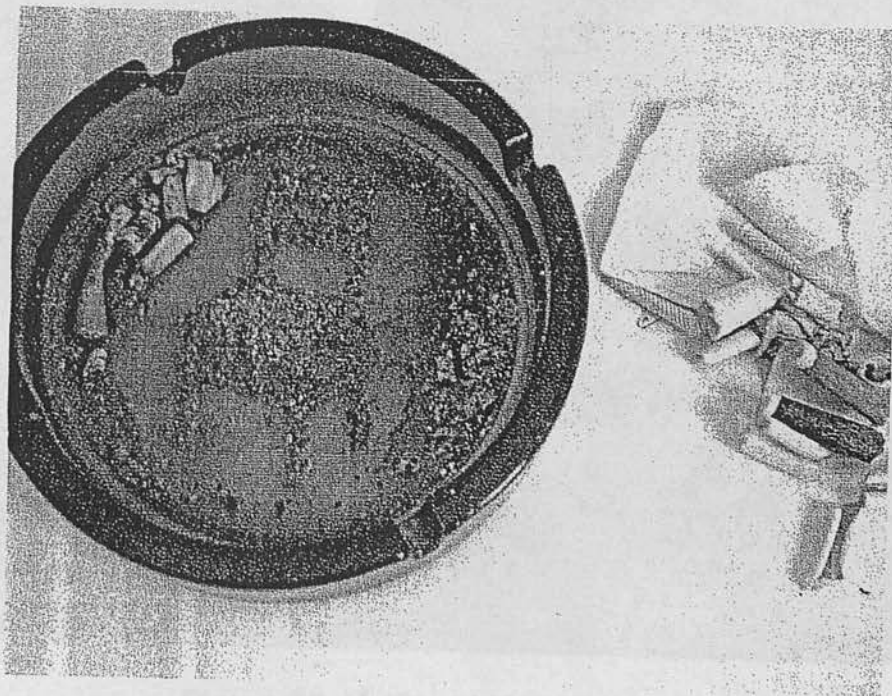


Figure 50. Detail (2005) Orhan Tekin

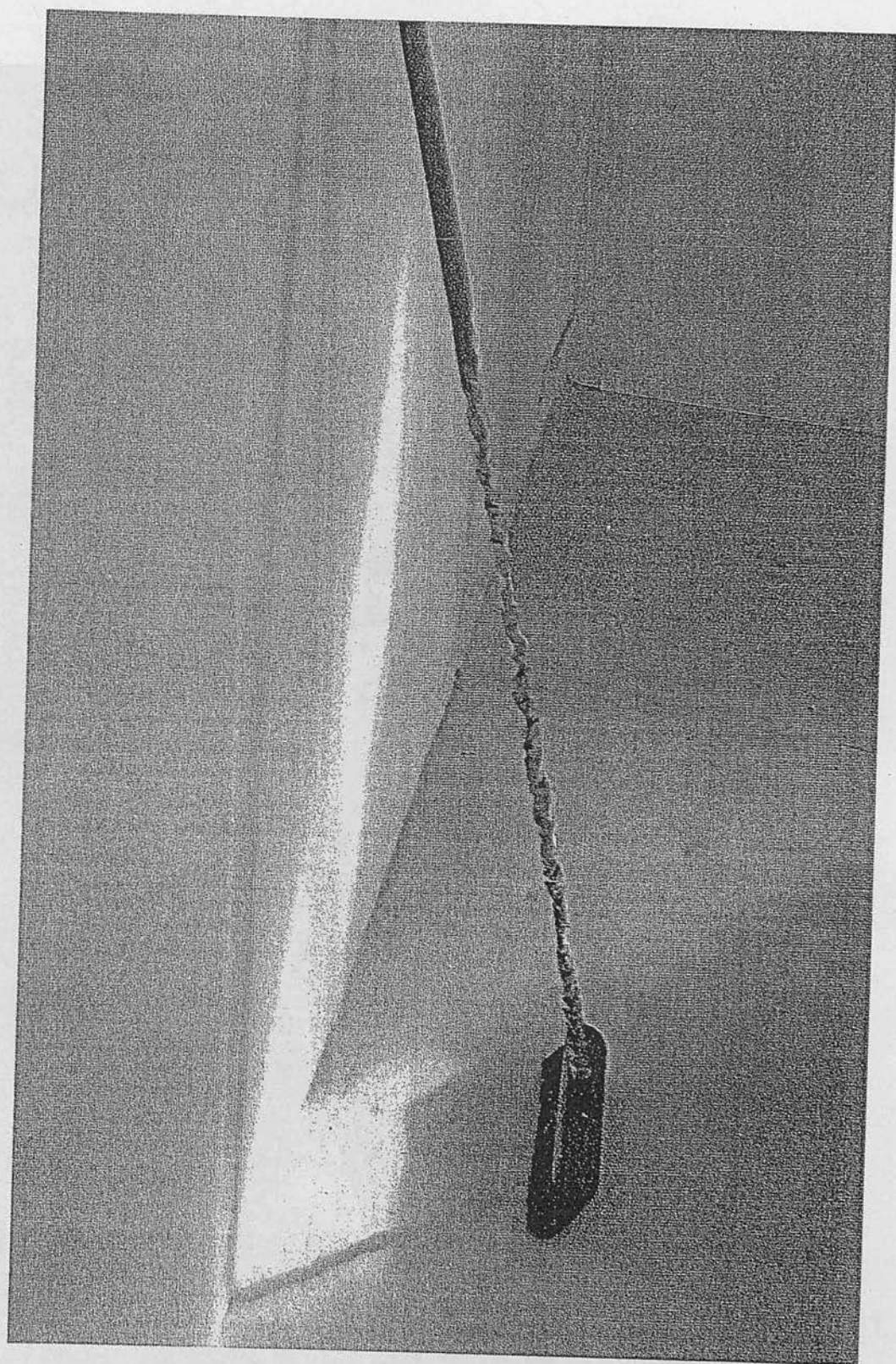


Figure 52. Untitled Life Sized Brush  
(2005) Orhan Tekin



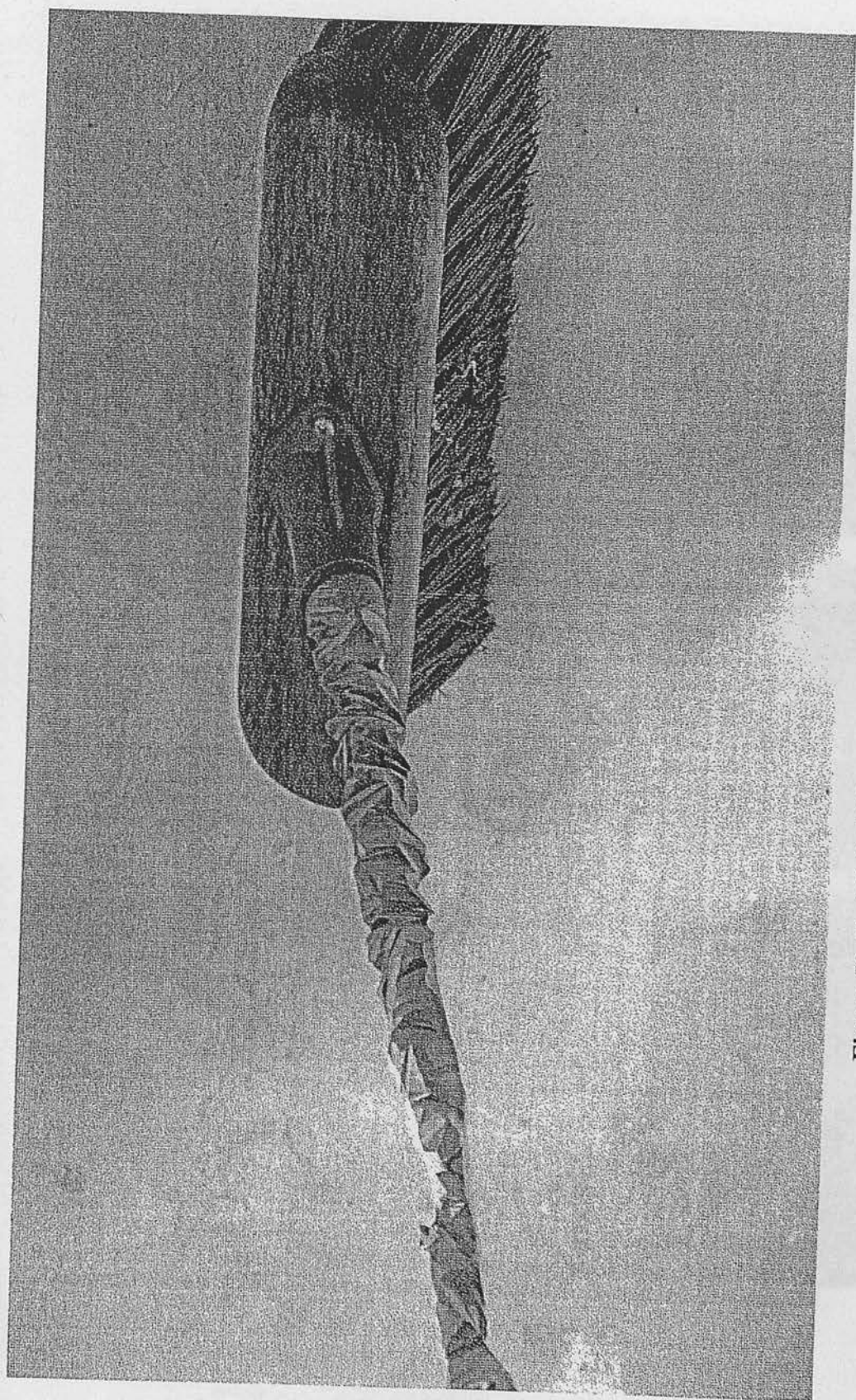


Figure 53. Untitled. Life Sized Brush (2005) Orhan Tekin



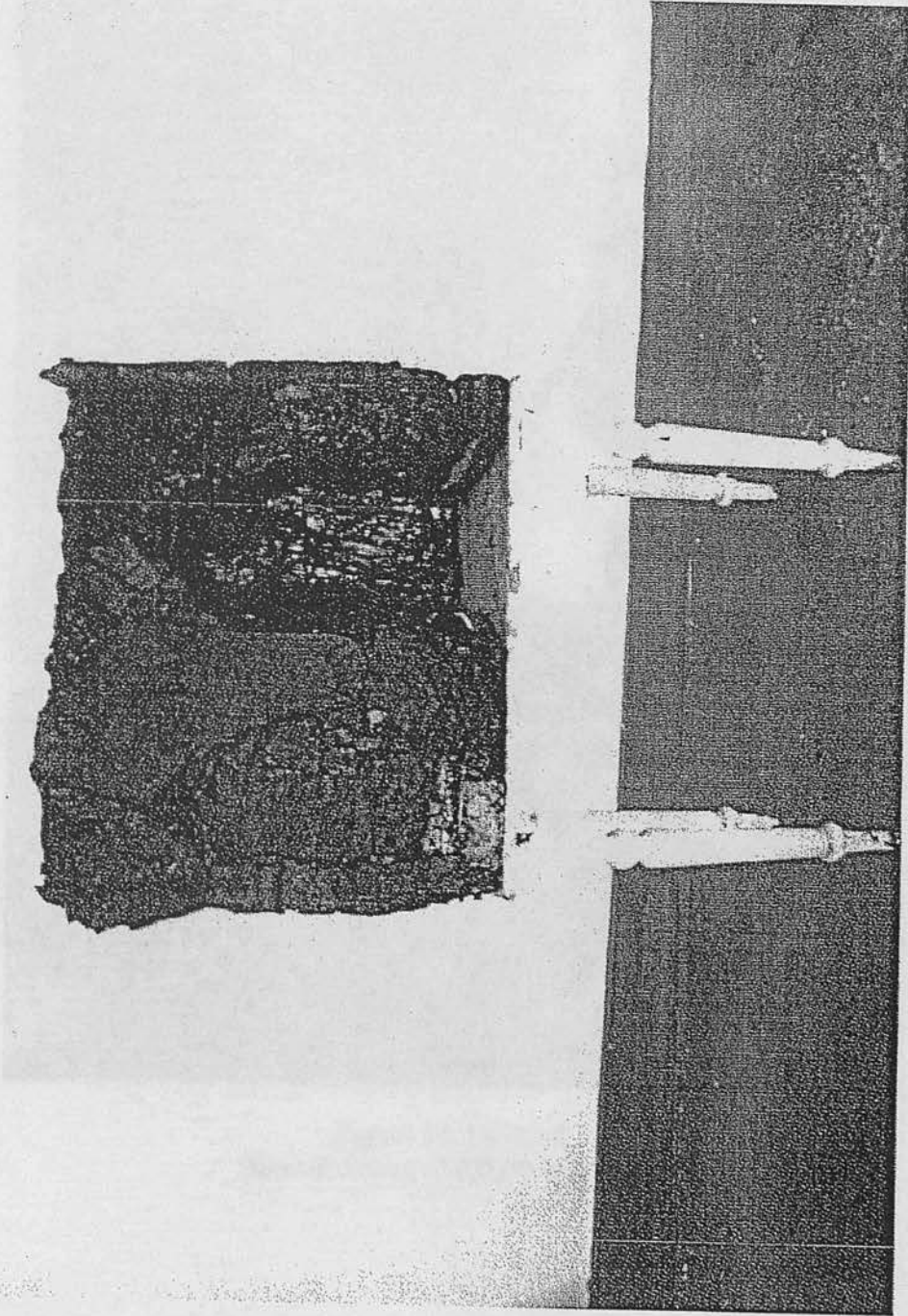


Fig.54 Table- Wood, Coal, Plate (2005) ) Orhan Tekin

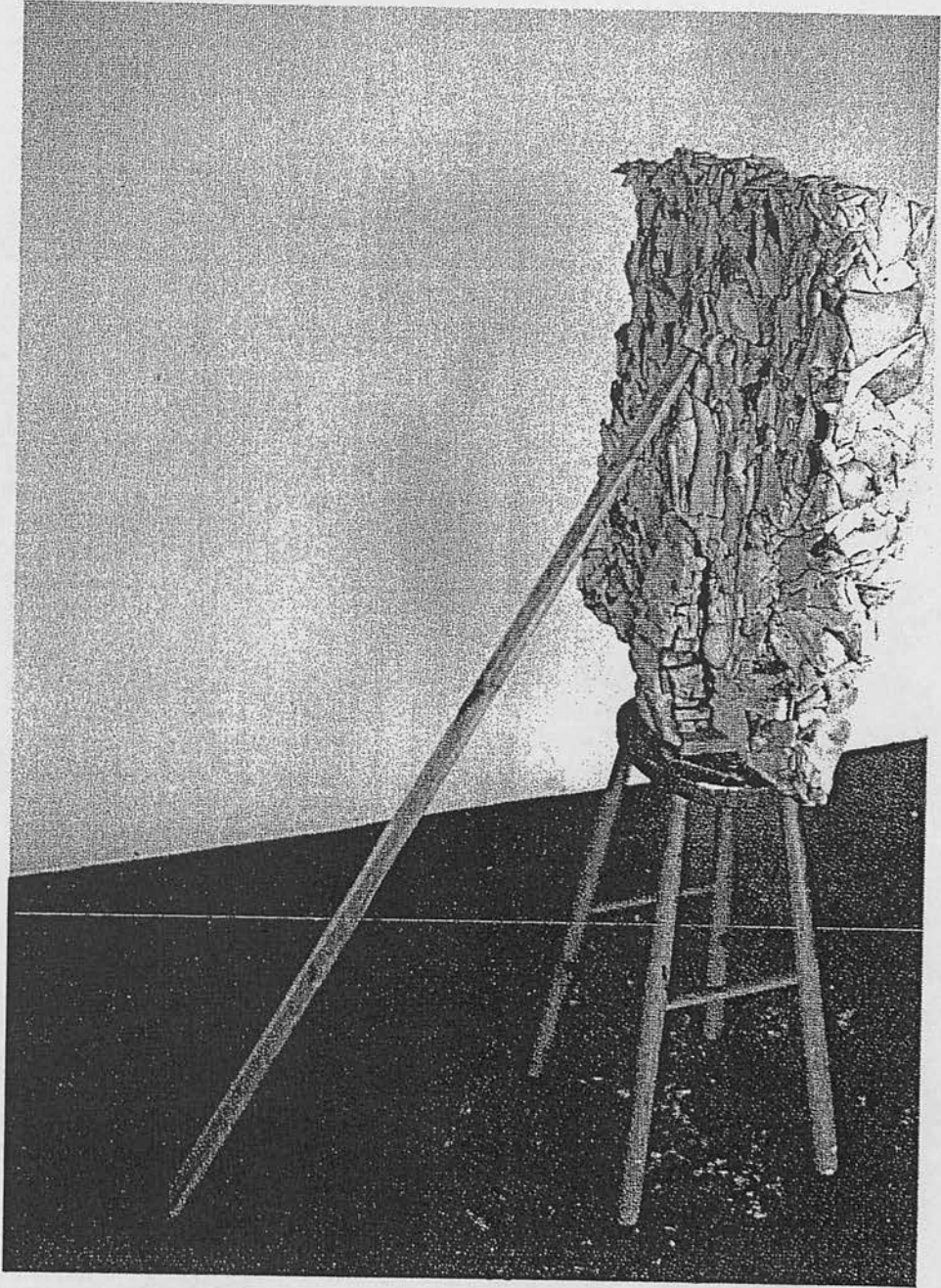


Figure 54. Untitled.  
Bone & Wood (2002) Orhan Tekin